

REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM
For Reaffirmation of Accreditation

To SOKA UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Date of Visit

October 28th - October 30th, 2020

Team Roster

Judith Maxwell Greig (President Emerita, Notre Dame de Namur University), Chair

Andrew Wallis (Associate Dean, Whittier College), Assistant Chair

Hanna Song (Senior Director for Diversity, California Institute of Technology)

Dianna Graves (Associate Vice President and Dean of Students, Claremont McKenna College)

Robert Allison (Vice President for Business and Finance, Vanguard University of Southern California,

Retired)

Maureen Maloney, (Vice President, WASC Senior College and University Commission) WSCUC Staff Liaison

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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT	3
A. Description of the Institution and its Accreditation History, as Relevant	3
B. Description of Team’s Review Process	5
C. Institution’s Reaccreditation Report and Update: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence	6
SECTION II – EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ESSAYS	6
A. Component 1: Response to previous Commission actions	6
B. Component 2: Compliance: Review under WSCUC Standards and compliance with federal requirements; Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators	7
C. Component 8: Institution-specific themes	21
D. Component 9: Reflection and plans for improvement	31
SECTION III – OTHER TOPICS, AS APPROPRIATE (such as Substantive Change)—N/A	31
SECTION IV – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TEAM REVIEW	31
APPENDICES	33
A. Federal Compliance Forms	
1. Credit Hour and Program Length Review	34
2. Marketing and Recruitment Review	35
3. Student Complaints Review	36
4. Transfer Credit Review	37
B. Off-Campus Locations Review, as appropriate—N/A	
C. Distance Education Review, as appropriate—N/A	

SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of Institution and Accreditation History

Soka University of America (Soka, SUA) is a non-sectarian institution founded on Buddhist principles with a mission of “foster[ing] a steady stream of global citizens committed to living a contributive life” (Mission Statement). SUA has a highly internationalized student body with approximately 40% of its 405 undergraduates hailing from abroad. According to SUA’s report, education is a holistic endeavor, “an integrating process in which students gain an awareness of the interdependence of themselves, others and the environment.” SUA supports one graduate program in Educational Leadership and Societal Change, which enrolls about 13 students. Following an inclusive strategic planning process, SUA has just made a notable addition to their undergraduate program with the creation of a bachelor’s concentration in life sciences.

SUA’s history in Southern California begins in the 1980s as an English as a second language (ESL) school with a master’s degree program in second and foreign language education with a concentration in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). After acquiring land in Aliso Viejo, CA, in the 1990s, the SUA undergraduate campus began operation in 2001 and was first accredited by WSCUC in 2005. WSCUC subsequently reaffirmed SUA’s accreditation for a period of 10 years beginning in 2010. Notable changes over the years include the closure of the Calabasas campus in 2007, and the move of the master’s degree program in second and foreign language education with a concentration in TESOL to Aliso Viejo, which was later discontinued in 2013. The ESL programs were also moved to the Aliso Viejo campus in 2007.

The 2010 Commission action letter (CAL) highlighted two main areas in need of response, namely obtaining and using more input from external stakeholders in the program review process and working with student affairs teams to identify and measure institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) through direct

observation and analysis of the co-curricular transcript. Both of these are addressed in SUA's 2015 Interim Report, which contains evidence of program review improvements in response to WSCUC's recommendations, as well as extensive work in student learning outcomes and their use throughout the institution, including analysis of co-curricular transcripts and collaborations across campus sectors.

In 2017 SUA became part of a group of WSCUC schools approved for the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR) of accreditation process. The TPR is a risk-sensitive alternative to the current Institutional Review Process for reaffirmation of accreditation focusing on institutions judged to be at low risk of non-compliance with the WSCUC Standards. Though all institutions must comply with state, federal and WSCUC Standards, TPR institutions organize their self-study around self-determined themes while also demonstrating compliance with the Standards. For SUA, these themes are:

- 1) Balancing growth and SUA's mission
- 2) Further strengthening excellence and long-range success

SUA's themes had the following goals:

1. Expansion of the Bachelor of Arts (BA) program
2. Continued and stronger commitment to the SUA mission and values
3. Continued and stronger commitment to academic excellence
4. Continued and stronger commitment to institutional research and assessment

Institutional themes and goals are fundamental parts of the TPR process and will be discussed later in this document. (See: Component 8)

Finally, recent changes in leadership are an important part of the institutional context. In June 2020, upon the retirement of the first SUA president, the next president of Soka University was selected. Prior to his presidency, the new president previously held roles as a faculty member and SUA's chief operating officer (COO), chief academic officer (CAO) and executive vice president (EVP). The Institutional Report indicates that a new academic structure emerged from this transition through a smooth, orderly

process. The new president inherits an institution on a strong financial footing, with over one billion dollars in assets.

Soka University of America has no off-campus locations or distance education programs (except during COVID-19), and the team was not asked to follow up on any matters related to substantive change.

B. Description of Team's Review Process

The team received SUA's Institutional Report and gained access to the supporting documentation about eight weeks before the visit. The team found the TPR report to be complete and well organized, containing ample supporting evidence for the TPR narrative. During pre-visit meetings, the team used the TPR Institutional Report and supporting documentation to formulate questions and determine a schedule for the visit. SUA's accreditation liaison officer (ALO) was very responsive to requests for information and was greatly helpful with the meeting schedule, both of which allowed the team to pursue its questions and conduct its due diligence. The team appreciated SUA's warm welcome, and in particular the ALO's willingness to accommodate requests before and during the visit.

The team conducted a virtual visit through Zoom, during which the team met with students, faculty, staff, and alumni, as well as critical leadership from a multitude of organizational structures, including senior staff, board members, strategic planning groups, assessment, diversity staff, and faculty in the new life sciences concentration. Before and after meetings the team spent time in the virtual team room sharing findings and discovery, raising additional questions, and requesting documents and data supporting statements in the report. Additionally, the confidential email account was checked daily, and evidence found therein was used to inform the team's inquiries and reporting.

The team chair assigned each member of the team specific areas of responsibility for the report, and team members then submitted their respective drafts to the assistant chair as part of a collective report-writing process.

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

The team appreciated the clarity and details of SUA's relatively short but rich history and the details of its curricular shifts over time (TPR Institutional Report, pages 3-6). The Institutional Report was well-organized, well-written, and provided useful background on how SUA arrived at its TPR themes (exhibit 23). As for assessing its transformative education, the institution has also demonstrated a strong commitment to the accreditation process and to institutional best practices through its assessment of core competencies and the development of institutional learning outcomes (TPR Institutional Report pages 9-10).

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ESSAYS

Component 1: Response to previous Commission actions

SUA's Institutional Report provided evidence that the institution was responsive to the recommendations offered in the previous Commission action letter (CAL). Those recommendations were:

- Program Review: a) Continuation of the program review efforts, b) Incorporation of external reviews, and c) Input from external stakeholders
- Institutional Learning Outcomes: a) Continued exploration of ways to assess the transformational impact of Soka education, b) Employment of direct measures wherever possible, including co-curricular assessment, c) Study of co-curricular transcripts data to be more deeply mined

Of particular note was the program review system, which includes external reviewers who visit the institution and complete an institutional rubric to help ensure the review addresses key areas that align with SUA's broader mission and goals (TPR Institutional Report, page 9). The TPR Report listed six programs that have come under review since the 2015 Interim Report as evidence of its continued development and implementation of this practice.

SUA's thoughtful response to WSCUC's program review recommendations can also be seen in the assessment of graduate programs by instituting a program review process at the graduate level. SUA's description of their process details how a review of student data led to changing some of the entry requirements for the program and to a renewed commitment to a small but high-quality program that seems well within the financial means of the institution (TPR Institutional Report, page 10).

Component 2: Compliance: Review under WSCUC Standards and compliance with federal requirements; Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators

Soka University of America has met the federal requirements for credit hour, marketing and recruitment, student complaints and transfer of credit. (See appendices for documentation and minor comments.)

Component 2, Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

Soka University of America was founded and subsequently developed with ongoing focused attention to its mission and purpose. The mission is reflected in the marketing materials on the website; the landing page (www.soka.edu) focuses on the statement, "Soka cultivates global citizens and critical thinkers with expansive worldviews prepared to provide leadership in a rapidly changing world." Also reflected on the website are the university mottoes, "Be philosophers of a renaissance of life. Be world citizens in solidarity for peace. Be the pioneers of a global civilization." As noted above, previous WSCUC teams have also witnessed the mission as the driving spirit underlying the educational programs of SUA. (CFR 1.1)

SUA identifies the clear elements of the BA program as being fully residential, liberal arts, interdisciplinary, international, and including mandatory study abroad. The Master of Arts (MA) program is identified as including a comparative and international focus in full-time study, with funding availability for students. (CFR 1.2) Data regarding program outcomes is clearly available to the public on the website, and the institution has stated the intention to include even more about program outcomes, so that

prospective students have a clearer picture of the type of intentional education provided at Soka. (CFR 1.6) Open communication with WSCUC has been shepherded by a respected, outstanding ALO since 2001. (CFR 1.8)

Diversity, as a result of both current events in the US and the presidential transition in leadership at the university, is a current strategic focus. Soka engaged in a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) institutional assessment conducted by a non-profit organization called Promise54. The first aspect of the assessment involved university administrators completing an institutional survey and policy audit in February 2020; the outcome of that audit was a “Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity (DEI) Organization Profile Survey.” Because the first phase of the Promise54 process did not include the entire institution, the team noted that the audit was not broadly shared with the campus; not surprising, therefore, faculty and staff were generally not aware of the survey.

Although Soka is clearly recognized externally as a diverse campus, particularly for international students, the university is “committed to diversifying all segments” of the university community, including students, faculty, staff, and trustees (TPR Institutional Report, page 17). According to the Promise54 survey (DEI Survey Report) and Orange County 2018 data, as indicated in the following table, the board, executive team, and staff (including faculty) of Soka are diverse and are more Asian/Pacific Islander than both the surrounding region and comparable institutions (as indicated in the Promise54 data). SUA is also less White-predominant than comparable organizations and has less African American representation than comparable organizations. Across all three constituencies, board, executive team, and faculty/staff, the university demonstrates less Latinx representation than either comparable institutions or the surrounding region.

	Asian/PI	African American	Latinx	White
Orange County~	21%	2%	34%	40%
Board	Asian/PI	African American	Latinx	White
Soka*	33%	13%	7%	47%
Comp org*	5%	18%	9%	71%

Executive team	Asian/PI	African American	Latinx	White
Soka*	43%	0%	0%	29%
Comp org*	5%	17%	7%	66%
Staff	Asian/PI	African American	Latinx	White
Soka*	36%	5%	9%	49%
Comp org*	8%	21%	13%	55%

*Promise54 report

~ Orange County website, 2018 data

Through the confidential email and campus interviews, the team learned that underrepresented students feel isolated and undervalued; the salience of racial injustice in the country added an important contextual element to the visit. During the remote review, the team learned that an employee survey was being conducted by Promise54 as a second aspect of the assessment. As one of his first acts in office, the new SUA president announced the formation of several new groups on campus, the SUA Center for Race, Ethnicity and Human Rights; the SUA Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; and the Unity and Diversity Council. The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is charged with developing a DEI strategic plan for the university. At the time of the visit, these groups were just getting underway, and their efforts did not yet seem to have traction. In addition, some underrepresented students were critical of how the leadership and membership of the new groups was designated. (CFR 1.4) Campus attention to diversity is further discussed in Component 8.

Component 2, Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions and compliance with Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators

SUA’s Institutional Report provides strong evidence that the university is achieving its educational objectives through several core functions: teaching and learning; scholarship and creative activity; and student learning and success.

SUA rightfully prides itself on its rigorous curriculum and strong interdisciplinary focus. The general education (GE) curriculum comprises the first 23 courses taken by a student, representing 60% (72 credits) of the 120 credits required for graduation. These courses are knit together by four

overarching institutional learning outcomes (ILOs), three of which emphasize attributes of engaged global citizenship (inquiry, global education, and civic engagement) and one that focuses on integrated learning. SUA offers a BA in Liberal Arts with concentrations in humanities, international studies, social and behavioral science, environmental studies, and life sciences. The robust GE program and undergraduate concentrations prepare students broadly for life-long learning, global citizenship, and a contributive life. (CFR 2.2a) Students' proficiency in core competencies (written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking) are assessed regularly using a variety of direct and indirect assessment tools. The faculty are partners in this process. Each program has established student learning outcomes (SLO) with appropriate standards that align with the institution's mission. (CFR 2.1, 2.3, 2.4)

The university also sponsors an MA program in Educational Leadership and Societal Change, which emphasizes becoming an active member of the scholarly community through research and conference participation. (CFR 2.2b) The MA degree is differentiated from the BA degree with clear program learning outcomes and a strong assessment plan, led by faculty, to ensure students achieve stated levels of attainment.

With just over 400 undergraduates and about a dozen graduate students enrolled at SUA, faculty and students benefit from small classes that support rich discussion and foster strong intellectual relationships. Each academic program, including the GE curriculum, is subject to regular review, according to a published schedule. Without exception, students and external reviewers laud the highly qualified faculty in both the undergraduate and graduate programs for their quality teaching and research productivity. (CFR 2.1, 2.5) SUA is addressing modest concerns about the GE program, specifically the rigidity of the required courses and a lack of clarity and consistency in how SUA assigns faculty to teach GE courses (exhibit 13).

Similarly, the university is working to align its signature requirement to study abroad more closely with the students' chosen academic concentration. This is a vital conversation since 100% of SUA students engage in study abroad. As the language department and the study abroad program explore modifying its requirements for students beyond the usual 12 units of language, the team encourages SUA to pursue new opportunities for internships, service learning, and other placements that allow students to accomplish concentration-related or similar goals during their time in another country. Since SUA has many contacts through its long relationships with third-party providers and with partner schools (direct-enrolls), the team thinks many opportunities exist to meet students' desire to expand beyond some of the more traditional study abroad experiences.

Program reviews are well organized and thorough to include robust assessment data, and highlighted strengths as well as areas for improvement. (CFR 2.7) The process is clearly articulated and managed centrally by a skilled and experienced Institutional Research and Assessment Team (IRAT). The team recognizes the value of post-study retreats and the synergistic report written by IRAT. An area for improvement would be to demonstrate a "closing of the loop" where the external report findings and recommendations are reviewed and responded to by relevant members of the program review committee. All elements of the program reviews could be shared campus wide and be the grounding for future strategic planning. Other academic support units and co-curricular areas can benefit from following similar processes by inviting a cycle of self-study, external review and future planning. The explicit integration of student voices and disaggregated data on experiences and outcomes would supplement all areas of the program review process. The team understands that the small sample size for certain categories makes presentation of disaggregated data sensitive; longitudinal analyses or other means are important to make meaningful conclusions for these small groups.

Both the BA and MA programs have clear requirements and achievement standards for graduation. (CFR 2.2) Strong academic advising and an easily navigable website provide timely, useful

information about those requirements and standards. (CFR 2.12) The Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators highlights a range of direct and indirect assessment tools used to gauge students' academic achievement in both the BA and MA program. In addition to graduate level assessments conducted by the faculty, exit interviews and employer evaluations suggest that students are achieving the stated learning outcomes. (CFR 2.6)

A hallmark of an SUA education is inclusion in a scholarly community that values creative enterprise and research. In preparation for a contributive life, students are pressed to activate their curiosity about the world through rigorous intellectual engagement and co-curricular experiences, including off-campus study, that broaden their global perspective and heighten their awareness of “the interdependence of themselves, others, and the environment” (TPR Institutional Report, page 2). Faculty are active scholars, claiming numerous publications including texts, book chapters, peer-reviewed articles, and creative works. (CFR 2.8) SUA faculty are frequently featured presenters at conference proceedings, art exhibitions/festivals, and international symposia. In some cases, students are included as co-presenters or co-authors. Indeed, intensive learning cluster and capstone projects ensure most students have access to advanced research experiences. The recently established President's Research Assistant Program is a promising enhancement to student research support. Similarly, the allocation of an annual allotment of roll-over funding for research and professional development opportunities has been an important support for faculty. Those who teach in fields in which they are the only SUA faculty member with that expertise are particularly appreciative of the opportunity the funds afford to stay engaged with professionals across the world.

The team encourages SUA to continue and broaden its emphasis on quality teaching, while also supporting research activity and professional development. (CFR 2.8, 2.9) The small campus and intentionally dispersed office configuration create opportunities for faculty to collaborate across disciplines, and to support faculty as they are immersed in SUA's interdisciplinary approach.

SUA's overall completion rates are outstanding. For the 2007-2012 entering cohorts the average four-year graduation rate is 81%, 87% for the six-year rate (SUA 2020 Enrollment Retention Graduation Report). SUA disaggregates their student completion data by "international" and "domestic;" the completion gap between these groups for the 2008-2010 entering cohorts was 17% (that is, the average six-year graduation rate for domestic students was 17% lower than international students, albeit the gap declined from 26% to 10% over the three years). Commendably, that gap for the 2011 and 2012 entering cohorts was nearly zero. SUA further disaggregates student completion data by demographic characteristics, where for the 2007-2012 entering cohorts the average six-graduation rate for Black students was 83.8% and 85% for Latinx students, slightly lower than the overall average, and a noticeably lower 78% for students who identify as "two or more ethnicities." Perhaps these kinds of differences are anomalous. At the same time, the declining performance gap between international and domestic students, and the differences in completion results among Black, Latinx and two race students may be informed by an analysis of this further disaggregation of data. Because these underrepresented student cohorts are small and SUA is committed to preserving individual student identities, alternative strategies to complement disaggregation, for example, the use of longitudinal studies may be helpful. Similarly, core competencies assessment reports generally include comparative achievement across students of different genders, academic concentrations, and immigration status, but the team concluded that assessment often stopped short of making sufficient meaning of the differences revealed to understand the impact of SUA's academic programs and support services on all groups of students including underrepresented students.

For its size, SUA boasts an impressive array of co-curricular programs including intercollegiate athletics, performing arts, student government, clubs and organizations. SUA is also in the early stages of developing infrastructure around diversity, equity and inclusion with the creation and support of identity-based affinity groups. Each aligns in principle with SUA's institutional mission; continued work is required

to ensure all students, including those from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds, have access to these programs and feel a deep sense of belonging at the institution. (CFR 2.11) State-of-the-art facilities and spacious residence halls allow students to connect with one another through activities, quiet study, and informal interactions. Each activity contributes to students' development of self-authorship, life skills, and global awareness. A co-curricular transcript is created administratively for each student, which captures their various involvements and affiliations. Studies of the co-curricular transcript identify correlations between activities and academic achievement, which are shared with relevant departments. As a next step towards increased transparency, the team advises that SUA involve students in this process, as the co-curricular transcript methodology can assist students to capture their various experiences, and more importantly, to guide how they are making meaning of those many experiences. (CFR 2.11)

Students are supported in their rigorous program of study through strong academic advising and support services including the library, information technology services, career development office, writing center, and tutoring. (CFR 2.13) Specialized services for international students are particularly important as 40% of students hail from countries other than the United States. As SUA contemplates enrollment growth, bolstering staffing and services, especially those related to academic support, institutional research, disability services, financial aid counseling, career counseling, service learning, the library, residential life, and mental health support will be important.

Component 2, Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

The institution relies primarily upon full-time faculty to deliver its academic program, and, impressively, for a student body of just over 400 students, has over 50 full-time faculty. Currently, SUA has a student to faculty ratio of 8:1, demonstrating a very well-resourced infrastructure of faculty. The staffing for the new concentration in life sciences demonstrates the commitment to adequately support

the academic program. Five new faculty have been hired, and three additional positions are included in the hiring plan. (CFR 3.1)

All full-time faculty have terminal degrees, most of which are Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees. The staffing report indicates that the institution employs nearly 200 staff to support the institution. The university has publicized its non-discrimination statement in numerous locations, as well as numerous statements regarding its commitment to human diversity. (CFR 3.1)

Faculty recruiting policies are described in the university's two faculty handbooks; and the method, approaches, and decisions are centered around the concentration-based search committee. The human resources department ensures that all legal and ethical policies are followed and the approval for hire is vested with the board of trustees. The search processes for staff usually include search committees for the more senior positions, and only several managerial levels of interview for less senior positions. The team noted that four recent senior hires were conducted without the usually employed search processes, and the board of trustees did not conduct an external search for the new president. (CFR 3.2) The team wonders whether a more standard shared-governance approach to administrative searches might be preferable moving forward.

Faculty evaluations are conducted periodically, beginning the first year with an informal evaluation prepared by the dean of the academic area in which the faculty member serves. The dean is aided by an additional senior faculty member knowledgeable of the faculty member's area of instruction and of the evaluated faculty member. After that formal reviews are conducted in the third and sixth years of employment. The formal reviews are conducted by a rank and tenure committee (RTC), composed of faculty members from the faculty member's academic concentration. The committee then prepares a report, after considering teaching effectiveness, service, and scholarship, and forwards it to the University Review and Tenure Committee (URTC) for its review, then on to the dean of the faculty. The dean then, upon concurrence with the recommendation forwards the affirmative approval recommendation to the

board of trustees for action. This peer review process takes place for both tenure and promotion, except for full professor, which is conducted by the RTC and the Full Status Review Committee (FSRC) in lieu of the URTC, before presentation to the dean of the faculty, then on to the board of trustees. The RTC and URTC are composed only of faculty members and thus constitute a peer review process. Staff evaluations are conducted annually, after the initial probationary period, usually 90 days. The human resources (HR) department reviews the evaluation processes to ensure compliance with governmental regulations and institutional policies. (CFR 3.2)

Soka expects its faculty and staff to participate in training and development opportunities provided by faculty development funds, for all ranked faculty members, and through staff development funds located in the budgets of operating departments. Faculty funds are currently set at: \$3,000, annually, but with a temporary reduction occurring in 2020, due to the financial pressures caused by COVID-19. Departmental directors make decisions regarding staff development, with a typical annual allocation of \$2500, also temporarily reduced for the current year. (CFR 3.3)

SUA’s key financial results are illustrated below; net assets have increased for each of the past three years:

Year	Net Assets	Increase in Net Assets	Investments
2017	\$1,542,049,000	\$792,225,000	\$1,239,053,000
2018	\$1,659,872,000	\$117,823,000	\$1,342,782,000
2019	\$1,666,926,000	\$7,054,000	\$1,305,735,000

This table illustrates the financial strength and performance of SUA. Notably, its endowment is one of the largest in the WSCUC region. While the audited 2020 financial statements were not yet

available at the time of the visit, internal, non-audited statements indicated a positive cash flow for 2020, a rather remarkable outcome given the negative impacts of COVID-19. Given the institutional performance and the significant financial strength of the institution, there is little concern over the institution's financial sustainability. A further indication of its financial strength are the key ratios for 2018: primary reserve: 9.3; equity: .99; net income: .29, all in the extraordinarily strong category. For the same year, the Department of Education Financial Responsibility index was 3.0, the highest attainable. The auditor's opinions for those years are "clean", according to the Moss Adams, LLP reports. The institution has no bond rating as it has avoided taking on debt. The manner in which SUA has deployed its considerable financial resources in the past to support the academic program is commendable, and SUA should continue this practice to fulfill Theme 2, Goal 3, Academic Excellence in the future. (CFR 3.2-3.5)

Library resources are impressive with 196 databases, including EBSCO, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and many others used for both undergraduate and graduate education. Additional journals were added this year, and more will be added next year to meet the needs of the new life science concentration. The library is also a member of OCLC and has web pages for students, faculty and staff through which they can request journals or books from any member of the OCLC community, without cost. The university has approximately 95,000 printed volumes on hand, and an additional 370,000 ebooks available. Study space has been somewhat limited during the past few years, but the new science building includes additional study space for students, which alleviates the pressure on individual study space. Group meeting space is ample. Information resources are plentiful, with each new student receiving a laptop computer, which, upon graduation is theirs to keep. Internet connectivity is easy to obtain, from almost anywhere on campus. The team found that students, faculty, and staff were pleased with the amount of resources available. The campus is both beautiful and well-maintained, with sufficient space for the academic and co-curricular programs offered. (CFR 3.4, 3.5)

The leadership of SUA have been drawn from both internal and external recruitment. For most, they have served the institution for many years, even though many have recently moved to other positions, as a result of the recent presidential transition. The team noted that leaders, faculty, and staff were transparent and candid in discussions regarding the institution and the issues they faced. Goal setting via the strategic planning process has been thorough, and records of progress are noted and discussed periodically. (CFR 3.6)

The university has a clear organizational chart that is easy to understand. Academic decisions are clearly defined in the various faculty handbooks and committee charters. The team found decision-making processes clear and understood within the institution. The chief executive officer (CEO) is clearly responsible to the board of trustees and oversees and evaluates the institutional officers that report to him. (CFR 3.7)

The institution employs a full-time CEO and chief financial officer (CFO), and both are qualified for their respective roles. While the CEO is new to the role, he has served the institution for many years in various positions, the immediate past one, as the executive vice president and chief academic officer. The CFO has served the institution since 1998 and is well-prepared for and externally respected in his role. (CFR 3.8)

SUA has an independent governing board, complete with the following operating committees: Executive Committee; Audit Committee, Educational Policy and Personnel Committee, Finance Committee, Investment Committee, and a Student Affairs Committee. The board evaluates the CEO annually and reviews and approves the performance goals established by the CEO for the president himself and for the organization. The trustees also approve the annual budget, long-range plans, changes to mission and vision statements, and oversee the investment performance of the university's endowment. The governance structure includes a corporate Member, the religious order Soka Gakkai, which retains only a few decisions: annual election of board of trustee members; the right to remove

trustees, and board officers; the right to decide on the disposition of corporate assets; the right to vote on mergers and dissolution; and the vote on proposed changes to by-laws and articles of incorporation. The Member has delegated almost all responsibilities to the board of trustees, who are responsible for the oversight of the university, and has not interfered with university operations or decisions. Board member nominations are developed by the Executive Committee of the board of trustees and sent to the Member for approval; no nomination has ever been rejected. (CFR 1.5, 3.9)

The current members of the board of trustees are mostly long-serving trustees and the past, immensely effective, president was the only CEO with which it had ever worked. The team noted that the board seemed to rely on past practice and the good will of trustees, rather than current best governance practices, such as term limits and periodic review of bylaws. Given a new president, and a long-serving board, the board should consider educational and development activities for both the president and board to help ensure continued success. (CFR 3.9)

Faculty primary governance structures are well proscribed within the two faculty handbooks, (undergraduate and graduate). The faculty governing structure is the Faculty Forum, of which all members with faculty rank are members. Faculty members elect the three members of the Executive Committee of the Forum, as well as members of the Curriculum, Faculty Review Panel, and the Faculty Adjudication Committee. The remainder of the committees are staffed with faculty members appointed by the dean of the faculty with advice from the Faculty Executive Committee. (CFR 3.10)

Component 2: Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

SUA has a comprehensive program review schedule and a clear process for engaging in planning, assessment and evaluation of their core programs and initiatives. Their capacity to lead these efforts rests largely on a committed faculty body and administration. Over 60% of faculty have led the program review process and nearly all of the faculty have participated in these processes. (CFR 4.4) These program reviews have followed the guidelines and processes institutionalized in the program review policy and

schedule. The structured rubric for external reviewers ensures a baseline for assessment and allows for the various programs to have comparable measures to evaluate strengths and areas for growth.

The self-studies have an expectation for data-driven assessment and reflection guided by the involvement of the Institutional Research and Assessment Team (IRAT). (CFR 4.2, 4.3) A range of direct and indirect measures are collected and evaluated to determine the achievement of learning outcomes. The exemplary evidence-based analysis centralizes articulated quality measures to guide the external review process. Built within the process is a meta-analysis where faculty are invited to provide feedback for future improvements of the self-study process itself. To strengthen the alignment and cycle of program review, SUA may want to consider an extra step that documents a response and/or action plan, a kind of institutional memorandum of understanding, after the external reviewers submit a final draft. The team is aware of some concentrations holding a retreat where a synergy report is drafted as a direct response to the external report. This tool could be enhanced to serve as the institutionalization of next steps that would solidify short- and long-term goals, future directions, and accountable objectives that could be assessed in future reviews. This level of dialogue and debrief may allow for the institutionalization of transparency and accountability for all involved stakeholders.

As demonstrated by the comprehensive and thorough planning for the new concentration in life sciences, SUA involved all appropriate stakeholders including faculty, staff, administration and external constituents like the Science Advisory Board with a vested interest in the STEM pipeline. (CFR 4.5, 4.6) Recognizing that new programs require significant resource allocations, SUA committed to define at the forefront the mission-driven justifications for the life sciences concentration. (CFR 4.7) Specifically, SUA articulates clear benchmarks for the learning objectives/outcomes and integrates a project-based laboratory component that supports the goal for students to apply science in realistic contexts.

The commitment for evidence-based improvement extends beyond the academic program to the co-curricular in the form of the co-curricular transcript study. IRAT collects relevant data to examine

longitudinal trends and involvement as it relates to five key areas: club activities, student government, community service, internships and intercollegiate athletics. (CFR 4.1, 4.2) These reports may be strengthened by including more qualitative components from focus groups and/or interviews with students to understand and portray the depth and breadth of engagement, the quality of the experiences, and the ways in which students learn and make meaning of their engagement opportunities.

On several occasions during their visit, the team noted that constituents did not always seem aware of assessment results such as the co-curricular transcript or important on-going surveys related to topics like diversity, equity and inclusion. The team believes that SUA would benefit from increased sharing and more open discussion of data. Authentic conversations about results will engage the community with important questions and allow for feedback and buy-in in decision-making. The team recognizes that there are sensitivities when working with a small sample size; pursuing longitudinal, disaggregated statistics will paint a more accurate picture of how students are achieving and provide greater transparency to potential and current students. The Retention Study Report is a good example on the IRAT website that includes disaggregated data, but the report does not include any analysis, nor does it include data past 2014. (See also: Component 8: Theme 2, Goal 4)

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

Component 8: Institution specific themes

SUA is clearly a deliberative institution that executes plans for growth in thoughtful ways grounded in their mission and institutional culture. The Institutional Report details the process by which they gathered broad institutional feedback into the selection of its two TPR themes. The themes are mission-driven, aligned with strategic planning processes, and grounded firmly in the WSCUC Standards;

and the themes have four goals with concrete focus areas that are manageable and meaningful. The following sections delve into each theme and its accompanying goals.

Theme 1, Goal 1: Expansion of the BA Program

The institution has chosen to add an additional concentration in life sciences beginning in the fall of 2020. The initiative was an outgrowth of the strategic planning process for the 2015-2020 time period which was approved by the board of trustees in 2015. The planning for the new concentration began in 2015 with members from the science faculty of Soka working on what became known as Phase I planning. Phase I planning resulted in the following: 1) a blueprint of the new concentration; 2) a preliminary hiring plan; 3) a preliminary curriculum outline; and 4) the physical space requirements for housing the new concentration. The intent was to prepare students who wish to enter health care professions requiring post-graduate education. The goal included an increase of the size of the student body by 25%, and the planning included additional residence halls.

In addition, the university convened an advisory council of nationally recognized experts in the field of undergraduate preparation of students seeking to enter post-graduate health education programs. The science advisory committee met two times during the Phase II planning period and helped focus the curriculum and building design to best serve students with this goal in mind. During this phase the faculty committee refined the curriculum to include the student learning outcomes needed to prepare the students for the entry into post-graduate health education. Also during this phase, a five-year budget was prepared that demonstrated the additional resources needed to provide operational funding for the program. By the time of the visit, the building was finished and many of the faculty had been recruited for operations kicking off in fall 2020. The manner in which the university managed this process was exemplary and a testament to good planning, review of plans, deployment of financial resources, and

fulfillment of this stated strategic planning goal. The institution is commended for its excellent planning and fulfillment of strategic planning goals. (CFR 3.3, 3.4, 4.6)

Theme 1, Goal 2 SUA Mission Enhancement

SUA's mission, "to foster a steady stream of global citizens committed to living a contributive life," is woven into every curricular and co-curricular activity on campus. From the mandatory study abroad requirement, language requirements, and learning clusters to the capstone projects, students are deeply engaged in forming a foundational identity as global citizens. Conversations the team had in a variety of fora revealed a deep sense of connection with the mission.

The dean of students office offers a wide breadth of co-curriculum units. Soka's appendices include extensive information about the assessment of these programs. The team reviewed those assessments to help discern if co-curricular programs are enhancing mission as intended. The development of the biennial comprehensive student engagement survey is a thoughtful way to collect indirect evidence that centralizes a student's experience with the full scope of opportunities and programs offered. The responses to these findings (e.g., Wellness Campaign) are intentional and purposeful. SUA may also want to consider collecting broader, in-depth qualitative data to contextualize the quantitative findings. Such work might also serve to illustrate multi-faceted student involvement and leadership experiences.

The team noted that some faculty, staff and students expressed survey fatigue coupled with unclear follow-through or conversation about the results. Similarly, important survey initiatives did not always seem well-publicized or understood by staff. Sharing survey results and assessment reports to all members of the SUA community may allow for increased transparency and spur agency for all members to participate in precipitating institutional progress and change. Additionally, albeit small subpopulations, the transcript study (see Component 2, Standard 4) may be disaggregated by key demographic variables

like international students, concentration, and race. Understanding the nuances of these groups would be foundational to the future work of centralized planning, assessment, and commitment. The changes from the co-curricular study from 2014 to 2019 are commendable (e.g., no statistical correlation between clubs/activities participation and grade point averages (GPAs) in 2019 after a negative correlation in 2014; no statistically significant difference between GPAs by athlete status). While these improved statistics are encouraging and laudable, it was unclear in reading assessment reports and talking with campus constituencies how broadly the reports are understood in the SUA community. Sharing how the assessment information was derived, what interventions resulted, and how the interventions may have contributed to the observed change are helpful tools. Explicitly engaging in the “closing the loop” process for studies like these in student affairs can enhance the tight, cohesive and comprehensive commitment SUA has to student success.

Soka’s intensive, short course known as the Learning Cluster is designed to enhance mission by fostering a student-centered learning community. The learning cluster area includes three student learning outcomes to be developed and assessed: investigative skills, leadership skills, and awareness as a global citizen. The learning cluster assessment (exhibit 30) noted that two of the three learning cluster student learning outcomes had been directly evaluated. The third learning outcome, “developing skills and awareness as global citizens,” seems to be a core component of the mission but had not been assessed by the time of the visit (perhaps as an unintended outcome of using course-embedded assessment). To ensure that all three outcomes are assessed regularly to support understanding the depth and breadth of the entire learning cluster experience, the team suggests that the area’s assessment efforts include a cyclical schedule of all three learning outcomes.

The four principles that help explicate Soka’s mission are to “foster leaders: of culture in the community; of humanism in society; of pacifism in the world; and, for the creative coexistence of nature and humanity.” Like all higher education institutions, SUA finds themselves grappling with issues that

engage these principles related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The national context in 2020, and particularly during that summer, invited deep reflection and engagement across the country. In 2019 Soka had an incident related to that national context. In response to perceived student frustration regarding that incident and the reaction and discussion that followed, the president announced a new DEI initiative, with three structures to coordinate the president's initial priorities in this area (i.e., Center for Race, Ethnicity, and Human Rights; the Unity and Diversity Council; and the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion). It should be noted that several emails sent to the confidential WSCUC email account also raised DEI-related questions which subsequently became lines of inquiry during the visit. These emails and conversations with a variety of constituencies revealed gaps in understanding around cross-cultural communication, sensitivity to underrepresented groups, and some failures to consistently and effectively communicate DEI-related matters. As planning, new initiatives and new offices are launched, it behooves the institution to operate from a collaboratively-developed, mission-driven, culturally-sensitive approach. Addressing the inequities, perceived and experienced by members of the SUA community, will benefit from establishing practices that authentically include all voices in various stages of the planning and implementation processes. (CFR 1.4) Students from minoritized affinity groups would like to see their contributions, work, and good will validated. Students from these affinity groups have demonstrated a desire for more agency and a clear willingness to engage in these difficult conversations and actions, as long as a good faith effort made by the administrative leadership to empower them to be equitable contributors to sustainable and authentic DEI reform. The team remains hopeful that the community will come together and heal the past while working constructively to move the values and tenets of DEI forward. The team is encouraged to find that all members of the SUA community see DEI as integral to the mission and identity of SUA.

There is no question that the advantages of being a small, mission-driven institution benefit the student on multiple academic and co-curricular gains. As SUA begins to increase enrollment, expand

academic offerings, and develop strategic goals and initiatives in student experience, these assessments will provide a backbone for understanding the quality and variance of these outcomes for a diverse student body. Some of these processes may be affected by the expected growth; thus, SUA may want to evaluate the outcomes as growth is achieved and consider the scalability of their mission.

Theme 2, Goal 3: Continued and stronger commitment to academic excellence

The Strategic Planning Matrices for goal 3 include four sub-goals: innovation; faculty research and mentoring; student research and self-reflection; and service to the community and support services for student learning.

Innovation

The primary mechanism by which Soka has worked to develop innovation in its educational program is the set of classes offered during the winter term called the learning cluster. “The Learning Cluster (LC), part of the GE program, is a research seminar where students work in teams with faculty facilitators to investigate a specific question.” (TPR Institutional Report, page 26) The classes are typically small, no larger than twelve students and are intended to help bridge between theory and practice, utilizing a range of appropriate disciplinary approaches, as relevant to the topic. This approach has been implemented for almost twenty years now, and thus is part of the SUA educational fabric. Concerted effort has gone into assessment and improvement; changes include a handbook, an orientation, an annual celebration, improved outcomes around student engagement, grant opportunities, and additional funding for international travel. As noted in prior team reports, the learning cluster is a model approach for other institutions to consider. Faculty choose whether or not a learning cluster is one of their assigned courses; faculty who choose to teach a learning cluster are wholeheartedly enthusiastic about how rich the educational experience is for students and faculty. They recognize that the workload is great, yet they feel very intrinsically rewarded through their participation. Likewise, many students and alumni credit the

course with enhancing their awareness of the needs of the world and increasing their ability to see how they might contribute. Even though there is an electronic bulletin board, open to faculty and students, regarding learning cluster proposals and email communications from the learning cluster director regarding the processes for application and decisions, some students shared their lack of knowledge and understanding about how the program works. Some students also viewed the distribution of desired travel funds as opaque and, potentially, unfair; faculty, since many of them remember when there were no funds available for travel, are extremely grateful for the funding that allows any student to participate, regardless of means. (CFR 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 4.1, 4.3) The team suggests that more and different types of communication about the process for course development and funding approval might be educative for some students.

Faculty research and mentoring

SUA maintains an ongoing list of faculty publications on its library website; given the small size and the teaching focus of the institution, the scholarly productivity of the faculty is impressive. While the documentation provided to the team includes a claim of ongoing analysis of the professional development needs of faculty, the last survey results provided were dated 2013; the team suggests that ongoing consideration of such needs could benefit the faculty and the university. The documentation provided to the team suggested that a new faculty merit program was succeeding the former faculty course release program. Faculty interviewed did not know about this new program. (CFR 2.8, 2.9, 3.3)

Student research and self-reflection

Soka has a number of initiatives that foster student research and self-reflection. The most important of these is the capstone project, which each undergraduate student must complete as a graduation requirement; there is similar focus on the thesis as a master's program requirement. The university expresses pride in the high percentage of projects which include a multicultural and/or global focus. Other initiatives which support student research include the Junior Scholars program of the

university-sponsored Pacific Basin Research Center; the Soka Instructional Garden; the mandatory requirement for study abroad, which helps support students' understanding of themselves as global citizens; and the increased funding for the research assistant program. Again, this is an area of institutional strength, which other institutions could emulate. (CFR 2.3, 2.5)

Service to the community and support services for student learning

Soka is just beginning to consider its engagement with and responsibility to the local and regional community. The primary documentation of service to the community offered to the team was an impressive listing of faculty-sponsored lectures. Forty-eight lectures have been provided on average for the last few years; the target of a large percentage of those lectures is student focused. While some would be of great interest to members of the surrounding community, that does not appear to be the driving motivation; support for student learning and success appears to be the intent.

A faculty team has been exploring service learning and made a presentation about community-based learning to the faculty last fall. Because of COVID-19, additional progress did not happen during this time. The team notes that community engagement is a natural outcome of the university mission; if the campus chooses to support this strategic direction more strongly, the team suggests an affiliation with California Campus Compact as a vital regional resource.

With respect to student services, the writing center, the library, and the information technology group have all assessed their services and impact on student learning outcomes. Of particular note is that each student is given a personal laptop, enriched with appropriate software for study. While there is general satisfaction with services provided, each report includes areas for growth. The writing center in particular notes the decline in usage by US students and "constant change and instability" in the directorship model for the center (exhibit 35). The team noted a frequent reference to challenges for international students. Perhaps, further analysis and/or disaggregation, in some cases by country of origin, in addition to the careful data analyses already done may help Soka continue to take meaningful

actions to support international students. (CFR 2.13, 3.5, 4.4; See also: Component 2: Standard 2). The TPR Institutional Report also noted that, as the student body has become more diverse, the need for a variety of student services has increased (page 18).

In summary, service to the community and support services for student learning taken together is a rather broad initiative; the team suggests that in future strategic planning, the intended outcomes could be further refined and focused.

Theme 2, Goal 4: IR/Assessment

A young institution, SUA has enjoyed a remarkable trajectory. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) has played an important role in SUA's success through accurate data collection, timely submission of national benchmark reports such as the Common Data Set (CDS), and a commitment to assessment that aligns with institutional learning outcomes. The OIRA website includes information about accreditation, archived Common Data Sets, and student success data.

SUA's commitment to ongoing curricular and co-curricular excellence is evident in its assessment plans. In addition to the WSCUC core competencies, which are evaluated through a variety of means, SUA also derived four core institutional learning outcomes from the institution's general education (GE) program: integrative learning, inquiry learning, global learning, and civic engagement. Means of assessment are established for each and were recently implemented as a pilot study for the general education program review. As is often the case, this process was challenging and rewarding, with many lessons learned for future assessment. For example, external reviewers noted that the assessment of entrance and exit interviews fell a bit short in evaluating the degree to which integrative learning is inculcated through specific GE courses. Inquiry learning was tied to a number of specific GE courses, including, most prominently, Modes of Inquiry, in which students are challenged to make connections between theory and praxis drawing on "everyday questions and the impact of the media (print, digital,

visual, etc.)” (TPR Institutional Report, page 44). As with integrative learning, direct measures of student achievement were not fully articulated, but indirect student satisfaction measures suggest the SUA program is positioning graduates to ask insightful questions and to evaluate the contextual, structural, and historical contexts that are asserted in various approaches to critical inquiry. Within global learning, university and external reviewers acknowledge some dissonance in how members of the SUA community define the attributes of a globally-educated graduate and how global learning can be implemented in the curriculum (exhibits 45 and 13). For example, some worry that SUA’s strong Pacific Basin focus does not explore more fully what it means to be globally educated. Similarly, some underrepresented students feel their concerns are not sufficiently reflected in their global education. Faculty are evaluating various rubrics to help bring clarity across the institution, and to more intentionally link the study abroad requirement to a specific set of learning outcomes. Finally, the assessment of learning within the civic engagement ILO raised interesting questions as to how the community should value knowledge of civic engagement as compared to the active practice of civic engagement. These questions are being explored.

As for assessment at the concentration level, each academic concentration has clear learning outcomes, many mapped back to specific courses. The new life sciences concentration is an excellent example of program development in which student learning outcomes align with the university’s mission and are supported by the strategic plan. Program reviews are conducted regularly and include detailed assessment data. Across the university, faculty appear to be active partners in assessment, and there is no doubt instructors are committed to the highest quality education for their students.

Assessment efforts include student services and co-curricular experiences. Acknowledging the importance of a robust student affairs division, SUA has taken measures to professionalize the office of the dean of students, and to ensure its organizational structure and resources reflect the changing needs of students. Well-being initiatives and student engagement efforts are increasingly prominent. SUA also recognizes student affairs as an important contributor to students’ educational outcomes. The learning

cluster, the bridge to business program, the Resident Assistant Impact Program, and service-learning opportunities are just a few of the high-impact practices supported by student affairs. Evaluating experiences can be challenging. SUA has adopted innovative assessment practices including the co-curricular transcript to capture student engagement. More can be done to help students make meaning from those experiences.

Component 9: Reflection and plans for improvement

Soka University of America has used the new Thematic Pathway for Review as an important opportunity to reflect on its own continuous improvement. It engaged the self-study process with intentionality and conviction of the importance of its mission. The university knows it is at an important transition point in its history and it is ready and prepared to launch on a new phase of strategic planning under the leadership of the new president. (See Section IV for additional summary.)

SECTION III – OTHER TOPICS (such as Substantive Change)—N/A

SECTION IV – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUA is a highly impressive institution with a focused mission and tremendous academic, infrastructural and financial assets. Commensurate with these assets, SUA has a gifted student body and a dedicated, well-qualified faculty, staff and administration. SUA has done an excellent job of capturing its strengths and recognizing areas for further growth and improvement. Indeed, SUA sets lofty goals for itself, and the team applauds the thorough analysis and well-documented discussion the TPR provided.

As SUA moves forward in its strategic plans and in its arc of continuous growth and improvement, SUA will benefit from more frequent sharing and conversation about assessment and survey results, particularly as it pursues efforts in diversity, equity and inclusion. Authentic conversations, based on disaggregated data, and a part of Soka's effort to spread best practices and understanding between the co-curricular and curricular communities will be key.

SUA already holds many of the keys for future success. SUA's strategic planning process for the life sciences concentration, which included voices from multiple constituencies including leading experts and prominent voices from a multitude of institutions, offers a great model for further institutional enhancement. SUA should engage without delay in a new strategic planning process that is equally open and informed by best practices. However—and as noted in the discussion found in Component 2 and Component 8 of this report—it will be important for SUA to carefully consider best practices in diversity, equity and inclusion in these processes as they move forward.

SUA already has a tremendously successful and transformative academic program that is clearly appreciated by its faculty and students and alumni, and from a substantial culture of continuous improvement as evidenced in its program review structures. Helping guide this community through its next phase of growth—whether it is focused on a new concentration or on other community goals—is a vital task that can help SUA reaffirm its unique and prominent place in American higher education.

In sum, SUA truly is a unique institution with a strong reputation, a deeply felt mission, and highly committed students, faculty, staff, administration and board. The team applauds the institution's dedication to its many communities and constituencies, and its deep engagement with the process of accreditation and continuous improvement. The teams look forward to witnessing SUA's growth and development well into the future.

Commendations: The team commends Soka University of America for:

- Institutional strategic planning for the new life sciences concentration, along with its new faculty and state-of-the-art facility, which are proud outcomes and a model for other institutions.
- SUA's mission, purposes, and distinctiveness, which are integrated in the student experience through such programs as the learning cluster, the mandatory study abroad, and the capstone project.
- SUA's overall financial and operational strength and the manner in which it deploys its resources to support the academic/strategic plans of the university.

- The serious and sincere approach to the accreditation process and clear commitment to institutional improvement. The team commends the institution’s integration of best practices in assessment and institutional research to evidence standards of achievement of the WSCUC core competencies as well as institutional and program learning outcomes.
- A comprehensive program review policy and process for academic concentrations and general education that is effective, thorough and sustainable.

Recommendations: The team recommends that the institution respond to the following issues:

- Initiate the next strategic planning process and begin its implementation. (CFR 4.6)
- Enhance SUA’s mission commitment by continuing to develop and by implementing concrete diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) plans, programs and initiatives to cultivate an inclusive culture and climate. (CFR 1.4)
- Better understand the differences in and nuances of the student experience and their achievement of learning outcomes, in part, by strengthening analysis of disaggregated data. (CFR 2.10)
- Adopt direct, co-curricular assessment methodologies that can be scaled and maintained over time in order to understand and enhance success in student engagement and community-based learning opportunities. (CFR 2.5, 2.11)
- Increase transparency and the opportunity for early and authentic student, staff and faculty influence, especially as it applies to new programs and initiatives, positions and governance. (CFR 1.4, 2.5, 3.10, 4.5)
- Strengthen board education reflecting best practices in board governance and support ongoing professional development for the president, in light of the unique context of the first presidential transition. (CFR 3.6, 3.9)

APPENDICES

The report includes the following appendices:

- A. Federal Compliance Forms
 1. Credit Hour and Program Length Review
 2. Marketing and Recruitment Review
 3. Student Complaints Review
 4. Transfer Credit Review
- B. Off-Campus Locations Review, as appropriate—N/A
- C. Distance Education Review, as appropriate—N/A

1 - CREDIT HOUR AND PROGRAM LENGTH REVIEW FORM

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate.)
Policy on credit hour	Is this policy easily accessible? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, where is the policy located? https://www.soka.edu/sites/default/files/docs/2019-08/SOKA_19-20_UG-GS_catalog_FINAL_WEB.PDF (see p. 139 for undergraduate) https://www.soka.edu/sites/default/files/docs/2019-08/SOKA_19-20_UG-GS_catalog_FINAL_WEB.PDF (see p. 182 for graduate)
	Comments: The GE and MA program reviews provide additional insight into the sequencing and credit value for the courses in the programs. Syllabus policy may benefit from more standardization.
Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour	Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	https://www.soka.edu/sites/default/files/docs/2019-08/SOKA_19-20_UG-GS_catalog_FINAL_WEB.PDF (see p. 139 for undergraduate) https://www.soka.edu/sites/default/files/docs/2019-08/SOKA_19-20_UG-GS_catalog_FINAL_WEB.PDF (see p. 182 for graduate)
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: This is accomplished through new course approval process https://sokauniversity.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/prod/Areas/registrar/Faculty%20Forms/reg_CARE_FORM2011.pdf?csf=1 as well as in curriculum review processes as conducted in program reviews.
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:
Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses <i>Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.</i>	How many syllabi were reviewed? N/A. SUA conducts in-person courses except for during COVID.
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? In-person/on campus (except during COVID-19)
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)?
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: See above.
Sample syllabi or equivalent for other kinds	How many syllabi were reviewed? 8
	What kinds of courses? Sciences, humanities, masters in educational leadership

of courses that do not meet for the prescribed hours (e.g., internships, labs, clinical, independent study, accelerated) <i>Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.</i>	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Psych, Interdisciplinary, Biology, Educational Leadership
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:
Sample program information (catalog, website, or other program materials)	How many programs were reviewed? Soka offers 2 degree programs – BA and MA.
	What kinds of programs were reviewed? BA in Liberal Arts and MA in Educational Leadership and Societal Change
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Liberal Arts (BA) and Education (MA)
	Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

Review Completed By: Andrew Wallis
Date: 11/30/2020

2 - MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution’s recruiting and admissions practices.

Material Reviewed	Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.
**Federal regulations	Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Comments:
Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? N/A <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> https://www.soka.edu/aboutinstitutional-research-assessment/student-success-data

	https://www.soka.edu/admissiongraduate-admissionwhy-soka-graduate-school/career-advantage https://www.soka.edu/student-lifecareer-development/alumni-career-and-internship-resources
	Comments: Marketing and recruitment materials are straightforward and represent the institution fairly. Very basic data on the IR website (Graduation rates, Common Datasets, etc.). SUA could enhance employment and scholarship data.

*§602.16(a)(1)(vii)

**Section 487 (a)(20) of the Higher Education Act (HEA) prohibits Title IV eligible institutions from providing incentive compensation to employees or third party entities for their success in securing student enrollments. Incentive compensation includes commissions, bonus payments, merit salary adjustments, and promotion decisions based solely on success in enrolling students. These regulations do not apply to the recruitment of international students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive Federal financial aid.

Review Completed By: Andrew Wallis
Date: 11/30/2020

3 - STUDENT COMPLAINTS REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution’s student complaints policies, procedures, and records.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Policy on student complaints	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Is so, where? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional Student Complaint Process • Catalog (p. 23)
	Comments: Institution’s Compliance Worksheet points complaints to Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education and WSCUC. Difficult to find from main website. More information on filing complaints should probably be available on the public website, perhaps here: https://www.soka.edu/information-current-students
Process(es)/ procedure	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, please describe briefly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may voice concerns through the university’s administrative procedures, which include meeting with his/her academic advisor, faculty member, Deans or through a

	<p>more formal process of grievance as outlined in the university catalog under University Policies or Student Code of Conduct. If students have a complaint about their educational experience at Soka University of America and/or believe that administrative procedures have not adequately addressed their concerns and/or circumstances to alleged violations of applicable state laws, they may submit complaints to the university or the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education for review of a complaint.</p>
	<p>If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>
	<p>Comments:</p>
Records	<p>Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where? • Registrar's Office</p>
	<p>Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, please describe briefly: • The registrar keeps all student records organized and trackable.</p>
	<p>Comments:</p>

*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)

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

Review Completed By: Andrew Wallis

Date: 11/30/2020

4 – TRANSFER CREDIT POLICY REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulations*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices accordingly.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Transfer Credit Policy(s)	<p>Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>
	<p>If so, is the policy publically available? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Transfer Credit" policy for the Undergraduate Program in Catalog (see pp. 146-147) • "Transferred Grades from Study Abroad" policy in Catalog (see pp. 52-53) • "Graduate School Transfer Credits" in Catalog (see pp. 164-165).
	<p>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? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>

	<p>Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The undergraduate (BA) program does not take transfer students: See “Transfer Students” on p. 118 of the Catalog.
--	--

*§602.24(e): Transfer of credit policies. The accrediting agency must confirm, as part of its review for renewal of accreditation, that the institution has transfer of credit policies that--

- (1) Are publicly disclosed in accordance with 668.43(a)(11); and
- (2) Include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission’s Transfer of Credit Policy.

Review Completed By: Andrew H. Wallis

Date:11/30/2020