

REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM  
SPECIAL VISIT

To Laguna College of Art and Design

March 30, 2017

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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**

### **1. Description of Institution, Accreditation History, and Special Visit**

#### **Description of Institution**

Laguna College of Art and Design (LCAD) is a private, non-profit institution located in Laguna Beach, California. For its mission, Laguna College of Art & Design (LCAD) prepares its students for careers as creative artists, designers and writers by fostering the acquisition of timeless skills based on observation, representation, and concept development, all while embracing the benefits of new and innovative technologies. LCAD is committed to offering its curricula through its degree programs that imaginatively combine studio work with academic studies, and to sharing its resources with the broader community through continuing education, exhibitions, and special programming with distinguished guest artists, designers and authors.

LCAD's location in Laguna Beach is ideal to fulfill its mission. Laguna Beach has long attracted artists and in 1918, a small group of artists founded the Laguna Beach Art Association, the origins of today's Laguna Art Museum. The Festival of Arts was inaugurated; a show of local artistic talent was soon expanded to include the Pageant of the Masters, which continues to be attended by over 200,000 visitors each year.

In 1961, local artists and patrons created the Laguna Beach School of Art. The Laguna Beach School of Art was incorporated in 1966 as a non-profit school and was housed on the grounds of the Festival of Arts. In 1977, the school purchased two and a half acres in the Laguna Canyon Conservancy area and built the college's main campus. In 1997, to enlarge its parking capacity for its increasing student population, LCAD purchased an adjacent parcel. Into the 21st century, enrollment continued its upward trend and by 2006 the college began acquiring additional properties through a series of leases and purchases. LCAD Gallery is located in downtown Laguna Beach. LCAD contributes to the community through its gallery exhibitions, community workshops, lectures, and library offerings. Laguna Beach and its surrounding communities also benefit from LCAD's cooperative partnerships with multiple civic and non-profit groups.

The college's full-time enrollment (FTE) has increased from 423 full-time enrollment in 2010-2011 to 592 full-time enrollment in 2016-2017. LCAD's current and desired enrollment target is 650 full-time enrollment. LCAD offers BFA degrees in fine arts and illustration, graphic design and digital media, animation and game art, as well as master of fine arts programs in drawing, painting and art of game design.

## Accreditation History

Laguna College of Art and Design was initially accredited by WSCUC in 1997. The following is a summary of Commission Actions from 2005 to 2016:

- Full review in 2004-2007
  - CPR in 2004 – resulted in continued accreditation
  - Special Visit in spring 2006
  - Spring 2007 EER – resulted in reaffirmation of accreditation
  - Fall 2008 interim progress report on issues identified from EER
- BFA in Game Art approval in summer 2008
- MFA in Drawing and Painting approval in summer 2010
- Off-site review in fall 2014
- Reaffirmation accreditation visit in spring 2015
  - Reaffirmed accreditation for seven years in summer 2015
  - Special visit scheduled for spring 2017
  - Mid-Cycle review scheduled for 2019
  - Offsite Review scheduled for 2021
- MFA in Game Art approval in spring 2015 (first semester began in 2015/2016)
- MFA in Creative Writing approval in summer 2016

In its Commission Action Letter (CAL) date July 15, 2015, WSCUC voted to reaffirm LCAD's accreditation based on the WSCUC team report. In addition, a Special Visit was requested for spring 2017 in order to assess institutional progress on the issues under the standards identified in the CAL.

## Issues Addressed in the Special Visit Report

The Commission indicated the need to focus on the following issues under the WSCUC standards for the 2017 Special Visit:

Issue 1: Establishment of a robust Institutional Research (IR) Function (CFR 4.2)

“...there did not appear to be an institutional-level group or committee dedicated to matters such as retention and student success. This absence is consistent with a lack of institutional resources focused on the gathering of evidence for use in planning and decision-making” (CAL page 2).

Issue 2: Creation of a systematic program review process with appropriate policies and practices in support of that process (CFR 2.7)

“...the institution lacks both the human resources and organizational structure to engage in the necessary definition, measurement, analysis and action on the multiple dimensions of quality assurance as stated in the Standards. This does not mean that the institution lacks a clearly defined sense of quality” (CAL page 2).

Issue 3: Creation of systems and appointment of personnel to promote the collection, analysis, and use of evidence (data) in support of institutional continuing improvement (CFR 4.3)

“There is abundant summary evidence of student accomplishment and program success, but that evidence is not accompanied by data that are systematically examined and used regularly to inform decision-making” (CAL page 2).

Issue 4: Use of evidence in strategic planning, across all levels of stakeholders (CFR 4.6)

“The institution has an ambitious plan to grow its enrollment and permanently expand the campus. The realization of these strategic initiatives may depend on a robust institutional research function to inform key decision-makers, given the primary role of enrollment management and the need to retain students who have been attracted to the institution” (CAL page 2).

Issue 5: Results of an examination of the organization structure to support a culture of evidence (CFRs 3.1 and 3.7)

“...the institution lacks both the human resources and organizational structure to engage in the necessary definition, measurement, analysis and action on the multiple dimensions of quality assurance as stated in the Standards. This does not mean that the institution lacks a clearly defined sense of quality” (CAL page 2).

Issue 6: Creation of systems to promote educational assessment focusing on the course level (CFR 2.2)

“...there is an over-reliance on student grades and critiques of student work as evidence of student learning, with no significant data on student learning outcomes having been collected” (CAL page 2).

## **SV Team Process**

The SV team received the LCAD report and appendices on January 31, 2017 and reviewed them, along with the CAL and the 2015 Visiting Team Report (VTR). The team evaluated the LCAD report in relation to how the CAL’s recommendations were addressed. A conference call was then conducted on Friday, March 3, 2017 in order to review individual team member areas of responsibility, plan the process for the visit, suggest adjustments to the draft schedule and determine areas of inquiry ahead of the special visit, based on evidence from the LCAD report and appendices.

During the conference call, the SV team identified additional exhibits and data to assist in the review process, including job descriptions and CVs for key personnel, program review self-studies and budget detail for assessment and program review processes. These were provided to the SV team one week later. The institution also made available to the team requested exhibits, including committee minutes, course syllabi, rubric samples and additional data, on campus during the special visit. An updated Strategic

Plan 2016-2022 was also provided in the team room, along with updated organizational charts.

On the evening prior to the visit, the SV team held a meeting to formulate questions for scheduled interviews and to assign interview leaders and note takers. On March 28 and 29, 2017, the SV team met with individuals and groups including the President, VPAA, Director of Assessment, Registrar/Director of IR and Associate Registrar, Senior Management leaders, members of the Board of Trustees Academic Affairs Committee, the members of the Faculty Senate, Program Chairs, the Assessment Committee, Assessment and Program Review Teams, the Retention Committee, students and faculty. The interviews were informative and engaging and indicative of the work LCAD has focused on in response to the CAL.

The visit also included a tour of the LCAD campus and student studios. The confidential email account was checked throughout the visit and provided campus constituents the opportunity to contact the SV team. During debrief sessions and evening meetings, the SV team worked on drafts of the SV report, completed the confidential recommendation form for WSCUC and formulated commendations and recommendations which were then shared during exit meetings the morning of March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

### **Off-Campus Locations or Distance Education Programs**

N/A

### **Follow-up Related to Substantive Change**

N/A

## **2. Description of Team's Review Process**

The SV team reviewed all materials that WSCUC provided. The SV team reviewed the LCAD report and appendices and additional data and documents they had requested from LCAD. During the visit, additional documents were reviewed in the dedicated team room on the LCAD campus. Adjustments were made to the schedule in order to devote time to meet with the VPAA and Director of Assessment. The SV team had identified specific areas of focus for each meeting and the SV team debriefed regularly to identify gaps that needed to be filled each day and adjustments were made accordingly.

The team met to formulate commendations and recommendations and drafted sections of the report. During the exit meetings on the final day of the visit, the SV Team Chair met with President Burke before sharing commendations and recommendations to the members of the LCAD community. The SV Team appreciated the responsiveness of

LCAD staff to requests for data and documentation and the forthcoming nature in which students, faculty and staff, senior management and members of the Board of Trustees responded to interview questions throughout the visit.

### **3. Institution's Special Visit Report: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence**

The SV report and appendices provided by the institution were assembled with the input of various faculty and staff in response to the issues WSCUC provided in the CAL. The response to the issues identified was clearly written and provided detail to document the work LCAD has done to address the CAL. Efforts undertaken by LCAD over the past two years are documented, including the formation of committees (Assessment, Program Review, Faculty Senate Sub-Committee); plans (Strategic Plan, Institutional Effectiveness Plan); data sources (surveys, program review and assessment data, data dashboards); additional personnel hires (Associate Registrar, Director of Assessment, Database Manager); and resources (faculty release time, professional development opportunities). The report acknowledges that LCAD is in what it describes as Phase 1 of a long-term plan for assessment and IR. Tools and practices are in place as well as the faculty and staff to implement them. The SV report raised questions for the team because it did not clearly portray the depth and involvement of the LCAD constituents in addressing the issues in the CAL. The interviews conducted during the visit filled in many gaps and provided the SV team with clarity around and evidence of the widespread efforts during the past two years.

The LCAD report accurately portrayed the condition of the institution, and supporting data and documents informed the SV Team's work. The report addressed each of the identified issues in the CAL in a descriptive manner, citing tasks accomplished, committees formed and new hires to supplement staffing in key areas of IR/Registrar and Assessment. In relation to evidence, a lot of what LCAD has done is new, so data is limited. Data analysis was lacking because LCAD has focused on collecting initial data, resulting in a data pool too limited for meaningful analysis. Efforts to address this are evident and LCAD acknowledges the importance of data usage for decision making.

## **SECTION II – TEAM'S EVALUATION OF ISSUES UNDER THE STANDARDS**

### **Issue 1: Establishment of a robust institutional research function (CFR 4.2)**

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

## **Evidence Examined**

- Registrar and Associate Registrar Job Descriptions and CVs
- Budget for IR professional development
- Academic Department Data Dashboard and Reflection Sample
- Retention Committee Meeting Minutes
- Assessment Committee Description
- Institutional Effectiveness Plan
- Advancement Dashboard
- Sample Data Dashboard Reflection
- Freshman Wellness Survey
- Campus Wide Survey on Teaching, Learning and Student
- Campus Wide Survey on Atmosphere
- Freshman Wellness Survey Results
- Campus Wide Survey Schedule
- Focus Group Questions and Script
- Food Truck Flyer
- Freshman Wellness Survey Results
- Freshman Wellness Course Syllabi

*Analysis of the effectiveness of institutional actions taken in response to the Commission's concerns*

The Commission's 2015 action letter outlined a number of recommendations, "...heavily focused on Standards 2 and 4, especially those tightly inter-related CFRs that have to do with creating a culture of evidence which relies on collection and review of objective data (CFRs 2.3-2.7, 4.2-4.7). Specifically related to CFR 4.2 the action letter's major recommendation was to create a comprehensive culture of evidence by "(1) establishing a robust IR function (CFR 4.2)...."

The IR function is embedded within the job responsibilities of two people who report to the Vice President of Academic Affairs. One individual holds the title Registrar and Director of Institutional Research while a second individual is serving as Assistant Registrar and Assistant Director of Institutional Research. The hiring of an IT specialist to develop data collection capabilities has enabled improvement in IR functionality, as has the hiring of the Assistant Registrar/ Assistant Director of Institutional Research. These two areas of responsibility (IR and IT) appear to be working together effectively. A number of individuals interviewed by the SV team mentioned the development of an intranet web tool (myLCAD.edu) that will provide IR data that is readily available to constituents. Interviews and meetings with stakeholders at the institution during the visit made clear that the faculty and administration of the institution find the Director of Institutional Research to be highly responsive and competent in her role.

The evidence provided to the SV team describes a number of steps the institution has embarked upon to establish and utilize institutional research (IR) which includes

assigning staff IR responsibilities as part of their job, establishment of an institutional level assessment committee and effectiveness plan and development of various tools such as data dashboards and planned implementation of an IR web platform. Data dashboards are now annually provided to institutional leaders at the departmental and upper administration levels to be used in program planning, assessment practices and annual program reports. During its visit the SV team learned that throughout the institution, there has been a cultural shift with buy-in from all levels regarding the importance of using data to inform decisions.

While these steps are leading to greater effectiveness in IR functionality, the SV team finds further development is needed regarding the specific purpose or set of questions the institution has prioritized for its IR function to answer. Greater clarity is needed regarding how IR supports and informs institutional planning, decision-making and assessment. Clear articulation of an overarching vision for the institution's use of IR, how IR data are to be prioritized, and most importantly, how data analysis is being used in planning and assessment is still needed (CFR 4.2).

#### *Conclusions about the institution's progress in addressing the issue*

Overall there is a considerable amount of effort and a variety of IR activities, but closing the loop by using data analysis to drive decision-making does not yet seem to have been a major focus. The SV team notes that neither of the IR positions currently has data analysis outlined within their scope of responsibility as it pertains to program development, program review, or assessment of student learning. For example, the IR Director job description specifies that the position "compiles data to the College's administrative and academic staff to facilitate strategic planning." The institution will need to give careful consideration to the job responsibilities and outline a more defined leadership context for this critical position as a function of enabling the effective use of data in strategic planning, assessment, and program improvement (see also Issue 2 below) (CFR 3.7).

### **Issue 2: Creation of a systematic program review process with appropriate policies and practices in support of that process (CFR 2.7)**

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

#### Evidence Examined

- Academic Program Review Schedule
- Academic Program Review Guide

- Liberal Arts Program Review Self Study Draft
- Fine Art Program Review Self Study Draft
- Budget Detail for Program Review Process
- Sample Assessment Plan – Fine Arts

*Analysis of the effectiveness of institutional actions taken in response to the Commission's concerns*

The Commission's 2015 action letter called on LCAD to "[create] a systematic program review process with appropriate policies and practices in support of that process" (CFR 2.7). As outlined in the *2013 Handbook*, program review is the systematic process of examining the capacity, processes, and outcomes of a program or department in order to judge its effectiveness and support improvement. Program review incorporates an examination of program capacity as well as student success (e.g. graduation rates, retention rates, disaggregated data, students' post-degree/professional outcomes) and achievement of learning outcomes.

The SV team learned that in the years prior to the 2015 reaffirmation visit, LCAD had periodically invited external reviewers to visit programs and provide feedback. In response to the Commission's recommendations, LCAD has taken important steps towards formalizing program review as an institutional practice. At the time of the special visit, the Liberal Arts and the Fine Arts departments were in various stages of preparing their self-study reports, representing the two pilot program reviews.

In her short time at the college, the Director of Assessment has drafted a useful program review guide to inform participants, and a subcommittee of the faculty senate has been formed specifically to review program self-studies and to develop some of the document templates that were not yet in place. The plan calls for all academic programs to undergo reviews on a six-year cycle.

In meeting with the program review teams for the respective programs, the SV team confirmed that various stakeholders, including students and part-time faculty, have been substantively engaged in the program review process. In addition, the chairs of the two pilot programs are active members of the assessment committee, and thus well placed to provide insights into the process that will improve its processes and guiding documents.

However, aspects of the policies and practices as outlined in the institution's Academic Program Review Guide and confirmed on site create some concerns for the team.

The SV team observed that the departments piloting program review are, in fact, at the same time initiating many of their assessment processes (such as PLO assessments) and documents (such as curriculum maps). This has necessitated a two-year process for the

reviews as evidence of effectiveness must first be generated before the programs' leadership and review teams can produce the self-studies. The SV team suggests that LCAD consider whether the two-year review process can eventually be reduced to a one-year process relying on evidence that has been produced through routine assessment practices.

In addition, the SV team found some of the process as outlined in the LCAD Academic Program Review Guide confusing and suggests that this key document be updated to ensure that it more accurately reflects the process as it is evolving. For instance, the guide states that "the end result of the program review is a written self-study report" (p8). This did not seem to align with the timeline provided in the guide, which specified that the completed self-study report was due in spring of year one of the review, which was prior to the visit by external reviewers.

The team also found this to run counter to its understanding of best practices for reviews, which might more accurately be described as resulting in an action plan to "support improvement" based on the self-study findings, the feedback or report produced by the external reviewers, and, possibly, consultation with Academic Affairs leadership. If the ultimate goal is for the program to take action to support improvement, the guide could be revised to chart that course more clearly for stakeholders.

The guide provided a template for the self-study report (as well as curriculum maps, etc.) but did not provide one for the external review report. The SV team was able to confirm in conversations with the Director of Assessment that a template for the external reviewers report was under development, so this and the previous examples are primarily meant to illustrate the kinds of revisions that the SV team suggests be made as soon as possible in an updated guide (i.e. before the next programs begin the PR process).

Finally, the incorporation of data and its analysis into the program review process is still emerging, and the team observed that more partnership with the institutional research staff to disaggregate data will be important if learning trends are to be accurately identified and resources efficiently deployed. For instance, the Liberal Arts program has done an admirable job of assessing student work on a number of learning outcomes (including core competencies), but they do not currently have the capability to disaggregate their findings (i.e. to isolate and compare for factors such as transfer students, international/ESL students, etc.).

#### *Conclusions about the institution's progress in addressing the issue*

While a thoroughly documented and standardized academic program review process is still nascent at LCAD, the SV team felt confident that the endeavor is being given a high priority and that its practices are being absorbed into the culture of the institution.

### **Issue 3: Creation of systems and appointment of personnel to promote the collection, analysis, and use of evidence (data) in support of institutional continuing improvement (CFR 4.3)**

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

*Evidence reviewed by the team:*

- Resumes: Safie, Leshner
- Assessment Committee description
- Institutional Effectiveness Plan
- Survey samples and data – Wellness; Teaching, Learning and Student; Atmosphere
- Focus Group questions and script
- Sample Data Dashboards – Advancement, Treasury, Academic Affairs
- Analysis of Retention Issues
- Ten-Year Attrition Report
- Sample assessment reports – Counseling, Illustration
- Enrollment data
- Sample program review data – BFA
- Faculty Senate Assessment presentation
- Faculty Retreat Assessment presentation
- Faculty Assessment Workshop and Overview
- Sample Assessment Plan, Fine Arts

*Analysis of the effectiveness of institutional actions taken in response to the Commission's concerns*

Since their last visit, Laguna College of Art and Design (LCAD) has made progress in several areas related to the collection, analysis, and use of evidence in support of institutional improvement. One major area for improvement noted in the 2015 WSCUC team report and addressed since that time is the addition of personnel dedicated to both data and assessment. Dedicated to institutional research are a director and assistant director. While these are .5 positions, the addition of experienced professionals dedicated to data collection and analysis is a significant step forward. The Director of Institutional Research/Registrar is experienced in data production and management. She is a long-term LCAD employee and, as such, is able to put data in context. The Assistant Director of IR/Assistant Registrar is relatively new to LCAD. He is experienced in the development and use of data and provides a fresh look at existing data. The IR team produces data for annual assessment and program review processes. IR also produces data for required reporting (IPEDs, etc.), program review, annual program assessment reports, and the retention committee. For internal data, IR is

working to present program data more visually because that is a more comfortable way for faculty and chairs to receive data. Seeking to present data in more consumable ways is a positive indication of LCAD's commitment to evidence-based decision-making.

LCAD added a Director of Assessment position in 2015 as a necessary step toward a culture of evidence. The original LCAD Director of Assessment resigned his position in 2016 due to personal issues, but an equally qualified replacement was soon hired. The current Director of Assessment is deeply engaged in the LCAD culture; her expertise and direction has accelerated the adoption of assessment practices at LCAD. Adding personnel with expertise in both institutional research and assessment is a positive step toward achieving evidence-based continuous improvement. In collaboration with the Director of IR, the Director of Assessment is tracking data to help analyze trends and working on an institution-wide data storage process. These steps are critical to producing the trend data LCAD needs to gain complete self-understanding.

LCAD has taken additional positive steps toward advancing evidence-based decision-making. They have developed committees to address continuous quality improvement, and identified systems for producing critical data sets, managing and storing data, and socializing data. The committee structure consists of the following:

- An Assessment Committee that "...oversee[s] the development, implementation, and assessment of quality assessment processes...[including] recommending modifications to assessment processes based on available data" (Assessment Committee Description).
- Department chairs who meet regularly to focus on the data critical to understanding their programs. Department chairs recently got course load reductions with the specific goal of spending additional time on assessment of student learning.
- The Faculty Senate established an ad hoc subcommittee whose goal is to develop a rubric for use with program review submissions. As part of the faculty governance body, this committee provides another opportunity for faculty to participate in assessment.
- The Retention Task Force was initiated to address concerns about persistence and retention. This task force focuses on persistence and retention data with the goal of identifying reasons for attrition and recommending actions to improve degree completion. This group relies on data analysis to determine cause, recommend courses of action, and review assessment once those courses of action have been implemented.

It also is clear that LCAD has data available in a variety of areas and that this data is presented in ways that can be consumed by campus constituents. The Academic Affairs dashboard, for example, provides program-level data on five-year enrollment trends, persistence, retention, graduation rates, degrees conferred, and student to faculty ratios.

The time frames for these data sets are inconsistent, but they contain valuable data at the program level that, combined with indirect data, can provide a robust basis for evidence-based decisions. In addition, non-academic areas also are involved in assessment efforts, although their efforts lag behind the academic units. Counseling, Career Services, and the library shared their nascent assessment efforts.

While LCAD has taken positive steps toward developing a culture of evidence, both individual efforts and overall processes are in very early stages. Structures and goals are in place, but these have yielded little actionable evidence. It is clear that LCAD has made real efforts to get processes in place that would yield evidence to guide decisions and evolve into a culture of evidence; specific direct and indirect measures are listed in the Institutional Effectiveness Plan, but few of these data sets have been developed and used to gain insight into institutional strengths and areas for improvement. Additionally, “data dashboard” is listed under “direct/quantitative assessment measures” in the IEP for educational, administrative, and co-curricular effectiveness, but no specific data sets are listed for inclusion on these dashboards. The IEP also lists a variety of student work types as part of direct/quantitative assessment measures, but the actual measures to be used are not included. This indicates that the planning is in process, but to date, actual assessment evidence is limited and missing the specificity systematic implementation requires.

Heavy reliance on survey data is another indication of an institution in the very early stages of evidence-based decision making. The IEP identifies surveys as the major data point for indirect assessment. The institutional report included results of a Freshman Wellness Survey, a Campus-Wide Survey on Teaching and Learning, and a campus-wide survey schedule as evidence of indirect assessment. The IEP lists several other surveys to be used as indirect/qualitative assessment measures including surveys on the following topics: Career Services, Orientation, and Atmosphere. Focus group questions, course completion data, and employment rates for graduates also were included as planned activities that have not yet been implemented. The current Director of Assessment reported scaling back on some of the planned survey, allowing LCAD to focus on more direct assessment efforts.

The evidence LCAD provided also reflects processes in early stages of development. For example, the Analysis of Retention Issues Impacting LCAD Students includes the following as data sources: 1) Meetings with first-year students; and 2) focus groups with students in each major. The report cites specific student responses and quantifies the group responses in graphs. While the data is interesting and certainly a step in the right direction, a more mature process would use student survey data in conjunction with persistence and retention data and with exit data from students who left prior to completing their programs. A ten-year attrition report was included in the appendices, but that data was not used in conjunction with this analysis of retention issues. Since

LCAD does have several data sets that would add value to assessment of specific issues and to evidence-based decision-making, and with consistent focus on an evidence-based culture, the institution is poised for growth in this area.

Also related to the way evidence and assessment are incorporated into the culture of the institution is the importance of establishing a clear distinction between the use of assessment findings for program improvement and the process of evaluating individual instructors. Several chairs at different points described assessment processes that led to conversations with individual instructors about possible ways to adjust their teaching to address deficiencies in student performance. Although this is not a common practice and may be related to the size of the institution, and the community approach to learning at LCAD, it will be essential as assessment trainings proceed to maintain a clear delineation between the practices of instructor performance review and the assessment of student learning.

#### *Conclusions about the institution's progress in addressing the issue*

The team concluded that LCAD has made significant progress in creating an evidence-based culture and focusing on assessment efforts. Meetings with numerous campus constituents convinced the team that the need for assessment of student learning and the use of evidence in decision-making is infused throughout the campus at all levels.

The team also concluded that, while LCAD has made commendable progress since the last visit, they have much work to do before they will have achieved a mature level in this regard. They have made good starts and have plans for deepening their efforts; the next steps need to include systematizing their efforts, consistent use of direct evidence of student learning, and deepened analysis of various sets of data to gain complete understanding of what is working well and what needs improvement.

#### **Issue 4: Use of evidence in strategic planning, across all levels of stakeholders (CFR 4.6)**

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

#### *Evidence reviewed by the team:*

- Strategic Plan 2013-2019
- Strategic Plan 2016-2022
- Information Literacy Full Report 2016
- Oral Communication Full Report 2016
- Sample Data Dashboard – Treasury

- Sample Dashboard Reflection – Treasury
- Illustration Assessment Report
- Fine Arts Assessment Report
- Sample Draft Curriculum Map
- Syllabi Evaluation Report
- Syllabi Template
- Syllabus Example
- Campus Wide Survey on Teaching, Learning, and Student
- Campus Wide Survey on Atmosphere
- Food Truck Flyer
- Academic Affairs Dashboard
- Analysis of Retention Issues
- Ten Year Attrition Report

*Analysis of the effectiveness of institutional actions taken in response to the Commission's concerns*

The SV report described assessment efforts at various levels (student, course, program and institutional) during the 2015-2016 academic year and presented examples of using data collected in strategic planning. For Institutional Level Assessment, the assessment of ILOs in Information Literacy and Oral Communication were provided as examples. As a result of these assessments additional ILOs were developed. Data dashboards were created and distributed in 2016 and department heads completed reflection reports in order to inform strategic planning. These dashboards are also available to the members of the Board of Trustees as well as the Academic Affairs Committee.

For Program Level Assessment, Student Outcome Assessment is now being completed annually. It appears outcomes are being assessed “incrementally”. For example, the Illustration and Fine Art departments assessed one learning outcome and made adjustments to the curriculum based on the findings. For Course Level Assessment, the Director of Assessment completed an institution-wide evaluation of course syllabi, utilizing an analytic rubric. Curriculum maps are also being created for course level assessment.

IR data on attrition, retention and graduation rates led to the formation of the Retention Task Force in winter 2016 in order to conduct a comprehensive review of factors that impact student persistence. For Student Level Assessment, Student Input on Retention was cited as an example, through surveys and focus group sessions. Findings from these data sources were shared with the Retention Task Force and student leaders.

Interviews conducted during the visit added clarity as to how evidence was being used in strategic planning. The President emphasized that LCAD is fully committed to quality assurance and has designated resources to support these efforts. The hiring of the Associate Registrar to free up the Director to do more IR-related work and the

hiring of the Director of Assessment to free up the VPAA are examples of this commitment. The President works with the CFO on long-range planning and they have hired outside consultants to support these efforts. Resources are outlined in the Strategic Plan for areas where LCAD needs to improve. The Strategic Plan is updated annually and the narrative is updated every 3 years.

During the interview with senior staff, the team learned that the CFO coordinated the assembly of the Strategic Plan in 2013. Each year the Strategic Plan is reviewed and student enrollment numbers are consulted. The VPAA represents faculty when new programs are proposed to the Board of Trustees Academic Affairs Committee and are then forwarded to the financial planning group of the Board. Senior leadership uses historical enrollment and attrition data. They drill down and disaggregate data on students and courses, to determine where students are dropping out. Fall enrollment numbers dictate the annual plan and spring adjustments. The Registrar/IR Director has a centralized database on each student and provides reports for all departments. IT is working with the Database Manager to create new reports and the Registrar/IR Director provides training to share data ideas. Each department completes an annual assessment plan that informs the budget and strategic planning efforts. The Registrar/IR Director, the Database Manager and the Director of Assessment pool resources in a “small school” approach.

During the interview with members of the Board of Trustees Academic Affairs Committee, the SV team learned that the board reviews data provided in the President’s report which is reviewed at each board meeting. They also review needs-assessment data for new programs and jobs data by major for existing programs. The VPAA presents retention data and full-time staff members give presentations to the Board. They discuss academic excellence and program success. Their sub-committee reviewed the draft Fine Art department program review self-study.

While these various assessment level activities provide a foundation for academic and co-curricular program review, it is not clear how these activities inform strategic planning. The lack of IR expertise to support the review of data and utilization in decision making is an ongoing issue. These activities demonstrate engagement of constituents but how data is used to focus on future planning is not clear. The strategic plan should provide guidance but there remains a disconnect between the activities described in this section and “the use of evidence in strategic planning” (CFR 4.6). LCAD needs to answer a variety of questions before it can achieve a true evidence-based culture: How are decisions are being made and is the effectiveness of decision-making being assessed? How are decisions connected to budgetary constraints? How does the board of trustees utilize the data provided in the dashboards? How is progress on the strategic plan tracked and connected to decision-making at all levels of the institution?

## *Conclusions about the institution's progress in addressing the issue*

LCAD's "foundation building year" produced campus-wide assessment activities that generated data utilized by stakeholders across all levels. The next step for LCAD will be for key constituents to harness this data moving forward and utilize it, "to assess the institution's strategic position" and "define the future direction of the institution" (CFR 4.6). Internally, the LCAD mission and vision inform planning and the dedication to LCAD and its future is palpable across all constituents. Externally, a focus on the greater climate outside of Laguna will inform the next steps in strategic planning that consider external threats (student recruitment, tuition dependence, socio-political climate influences) in order to mitigate for them.

### **Issue 5: Results of an examination of the organization structure to support a culture of evidence (CFR 3.1 and 3.7)**

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

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

*Evidence reviewed by the team:*

- LCAD Institutional Effectiveness Plan
- Director of Assessment Job Description
- Registrar and Associate Registrar Job Descriptions and CVs
- Program Chairs Job Description
- Budget for IR and Assessment Professional Development
- Organizational Charts
- Adjunct Faculty Teaching Load Breakout
- Retention Committee Meeting Minutes

*Analysis of the effectiveness of institutional actions taken in response to the Commission's concerns*

The SV team had the opportunity to discuss LCAD organizational capacity around evidence-based decision making with the senior staff (cabinet level), the assessment committee, the faculty senate, program chairs, the retention task force, and others, during the visit.

In its 2015 report, the visiting team expressed concern that the organizational structure was insufficient to support development of the assessment and institutional research function. Specifically, the visiting team noted that “the current levels of concentration of duties and functions in the office of the VPAA are demonstrably unsustainable” necessitating a review of the organizational structure “to provide the guidance and support necessary for institutionalizing a culture of evidence. (CFRs 3.1 & 3.7)” (2015 VTR 31).

Since the CAL recommendations were received, LCAD has taken significant steps to address these capacity concerns through the hiring of key personnel to lead the planning and implementation of assessment and institutional research. Line releases have enabled chairs to assume more of the administrative and planning responsibilities in their programs, and the ALO duties have recently shifted from the VPAA to the new Director of Assessment. These steps have significantly improved the college’s structural capacity to support educational effectiveness.

In addition, LCAD has now developed a thorough institutional effectiveness plan (IEP), delineating key roles for individuals and committees around multi-level assessment practices and oversight covering academic, administrative, and co-curricular functions. For instance, LCAD now has in place a standing retention committee and a standing assessment committee (to vet and review assessment efforts). The plan also calls for the use of assessment and other kinds of evidence to determine budgeting and strategic planning priorities. The special visit team saw convincing evidence that the IEP was beginning to be carried out effectively.

However, the team notes that while the VPAA position is very capably staffed by an administrator whose tenure at the institution spans some 30 years and who has functioned in many roles--including as interim president--there will need to be attention paid in the coming years to succession planning of this position as it is unlikely that any successor will bring the capacity and knowledge base to effectively lead on so many fronts (i.e. oversight of 16 reports). In addition, with ambitions to increase enrollment, improve retention, launch new programs, and develop additional facilities – all in the near term – the leadership of Academic Affairs will only become more complex. The team further suggests that succession planning in the area of institutional research be examined to ensure the college’s burgeoning institutional research function builds capacity to become more engaged with assessment (as discussed in Section 1 of this report).

Other elements of the organizational structure that will need attention to continue the significant progress on evidence-based decision making include prioritizing assessment responsibilities in the duties and job descriptions of key individuals. In particular, the team noted that the position description of the Director of Institutional

Research did not articulate any relationship to the assessment function (including program review), which was a key element in the 2015 team's concerns around the institutional research function as relates to the implementation of a culture of evidence: "the greatest need for IR relates to its academic applications in assessment and program review, which is not the current focus of institutional efforts (CFRs 4.2, 4.3)" (2015 VTR, 31).

*Conclusions about the institution's progress in addressing the issue*

LCAD has taken effective action to address the capacity deficiencies that the 2015 team identified as impeding the development of its educational effectiveness function. As noted above, these steps will need time to take root and fully evolve, but the SV team saw convincing evidence that the college was making concerted and impressive progress in alignment with the Commission's recommendations.

**Issue 6: Creation of systems to promote educational assessment focusing on the course level (CFR 2.2)**

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

*Evidence reviewed by the team:*

- Resumes: Safie and Leshner
- Faculty Senate Assessment presentation (program assessment reflective of course level learning) Slide 11
- Sample course evaluation
- Sample course evaluation report
- Oral Communication full report
- Information Literacy full report

*Analysis of the effectiveness of institutional actions taken in response to the Commission's concerns*

The Laguna College of Art and Design Special Visit Report identifies two forms of assessment it has established targeting the course level and a third that informs course level issues. The first is a process for student evaluation of teaching that yields reports run by Evaluation Kit. The report provides the percentage of students choosing each possible response. Each faculty member receives evaluations for his or her courses, as do their department chairs. Department chairs discuss overall performance with the faculty, and a process is in place to address more complex issues should they be revealed through the evaluations. This process is designed to provide systematic feedback on teaching and learning. The second form of course level assessment is planned but not yet implemented. The plan is to use course grading related to course outcomes. The third assessment impacting the course level is using assessment of

institutional and program level assessments to provide information at the course level. The Special Visit Report states that this already has been experienced, although the only examples provided were from general education. This is a promising start that needs to continue, deepen, and cross all program areas.

Meetings with both full and part-time faculty revealed familiarity with and commitment to assessment at the course level. Faculty explained that “building blocks” were in place where assessment involved course, program, and institutional levels. Some lack of clarity remained regarding distinguishing between evaluation of individual students and aggregated assessment of student learning across programs, but there was consistent recognition that assessment at the program level needs to include assessment at the course level and align with institutional outcomes. Faculty in arts programs also described processes in place for evaluating student work at key points in their programs. Faculty members review student progress at the end of the second year of study. These “advancement reviews” determine if student work demonstrates sufficient mastery to progress to the third year of study. If any deficiencies are identified, students either receive tutoring to address areas of weakness or, if deficiencies are more significant, repeat a course. Because advancement reviews tie back to content in specific courses, they have served informally as course assessment. Faculty provided an example of how advancement reviews served a course assessment function. Faculty identified the Typography courses as a consistent weakness; students overall were not achieving the expected level of performance. After careful review, the faculty determined that another course in the Typography sequence would resolve the issue. They made that curricular change and are monitoring student progress to measure the impact of the change. Faculty recognize the need for course level assessment and the importance of formalizing it. That process is progressing in the art majors, although it remains in the early stages of systematic review.

Faculty in the Liberal Arts program also are focused on course level assessment. In 2015/2016 Liberal Arts faculty assessed oral communication. Faculty used the AAC&U value rubrics as a guide for creation of an LCAD rubric to be administered in the Senior Capstone course in which students are required to present their senior projects as an oral defense. The assessment had two parts: 1) Indirect assessment in the form of a campus-wide survey on teaching and learning; and 2) all oral defenses from the Senior Capstone course (N=77). A rotating team of three members of the research team scored each oral defense. Faculty reviewed the findings and are moving forward with the assessment process in this area including refining the rubric and mapping oral communication across the curriculum. A similar assessment process was followed for Information Literacy. Findings from all assessment efforts are reported to the Faculty Senate. The current Chair of Liberal Arts is advancing assessment efforts to include blind reviews of student writing against a rubric and portfolio reviews. While these efforts are in early stages, they demonstrate commitment to assessment efforts at the

course, program, and institutional levels. Faculty across programs also are looking at each other's efforts as a way to deepen their own understanding of assessment and to determine which course assessment efforts can be applied across courses and programs.

*Conclusions about the institution's progress in addressing the issue*

The current course evaluation process provides important information about teaching and learning. It relies heavily, however, on indirect assessment. Efforts to develop direct assessment processes at the course level are in place, but it will take time to develop assessment tools and gather sufficient data to yield meaningful results. Similarly, LCAD uses grading to evaluate individual student work. If appropriately organized, aggregated, and analyzed, it can yield interesting information about student progress through a program. "The second form of assessment that occurs at the course level is grading related to assignments and course outcomes. This has not been directly addressed just yet because the current plan is to build institutional and program level assessment processes and structures" (p.23). Even when fully implemented, grades will not provide insights into the specific areas where curricula or teaching methods need adjustment. That level of insight results from analysis of specific areas of student performance. LCAD has made progress and is now focused on finding the best ways to integrate course level assessment into its overall assessment plan. Efforts are in the very early stages, so the significance of their results is yet to be realized.

Finally, LCAD's SVR states that "institutional level and program level assessment have already had a direct impact on course level practices..." but no specific evidence is provided. Rather, the report notes that faculty professional development is required and planned "...over the next couple of years..." Faculty professional development is indeed a critical aspect of impactful assessment at the course level, but the indistinct nature of the timeline for faculty development indicates the lack of mature development of a plan for faculty development that would generate meaningful course level assessment plans and processes. Assessment processes at LCAD are new and in the very earliest stages of implementation. Currently, those processes rely on indirect general assessments and some individual program efforts toward comprehensive direct assessment practices. Those individual processes are clear in the report and indicate progress; how they work together to provide actionable data and a comprehensive understanding of how well programs are achieving intended results will be seen only after the processes are formalized and integrated across the institution.

**SECTION III - OTHER TOPICS, AS APPROPRIATE**

N/A

## SECTION IV - FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While LCAD has developed a useful institutional effectiveness plan around assessment efforts, the SVR itself could have done more to provide a clear vision of the institution's own goals with respect to the issues and how it plans to achieve them. The interviews during the visit provided more detail in relation to the impact of the activities, initiatives and progress made during the past two years and in relation to the reasons why actions were taken and the roles of various constituents in addressing the recommendations. Analysis of effectiveness of these actions, the role of assessment in advancing LCAD and the importance of analysis to add to the progress made will be key. With so much activity underway, it will be important for the LCAD community to take the time to analyze what they have achieved and identify, disaggregate, and analyze actionable data; in this way, LCAD will be able to improve new processes and procedures put in place during the past two years in order to focus the vision for the institution around assessment, program review and how it connects with strategic planning.

### Commendations:

1. LCAD took a series of actions targeting recommendations from the last WSCUC visit with tangible results.
2. The allocation of resources to assessment and program review demonstrates the commitment to these efforts. LCAD added the following dedicated resources:
  - Human
    - ✍ IR
    - ✍ DB manager
    - ✍ Director of Assessment
  - Structural
    - ✍ Office of Assessment
    - ✍ Course load reduction for chairs
3. Demonstrated enthusiasm for assessment and evidence-based decisions is visible throughout the college at all levels.
4. Leadership in assessment is evidenced by the creation of documents and processes.
5. A variety of stakeholders including the Board, part-time faculty, and students are involved in assessment and program review.

### Recommendations

1. Continue allocating resources to develop IR, assessment and program review capacities.
2. Integrate IR data and analysis into student learning outcome assessment.
3. As the institution continues to grow and support a culture of evidence, it will be important to address organizational structure and succession planning in the annual strategic planning process.
4. In clarifying its vision for assessment's progress, the institution will need to focus on (a) revising program review processes and procedures after completion of the pilot phase; (b) distinguish between program assessment and individual student

evaluation; (c) ensure that assessment of student learning is not conflated with faculty performance evaluations.

## **APPENDICES**

N/A