

REPORT OF THE WSCUC VISITING TEAM
SEEKING ACCREDITATION VISIT 1

To AMDA College of the Performing Arts

September 8-11, 2020

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The team evaluated the institution under the WSCUC Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective judgment for consideration and action by the institution and by the WSCUC Senior College and University Commission. The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. Once an institution achieves either candidacy or initial accreditation, the team report and Commission Action Letter associated with the review that resulted in the granting of either candidacy or initial accreditation and the team reports and Commission Action Letters of any subsequent reviews will be made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

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SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of Institution and Visit

The AMDA College of the Performing Arts was opened in 1964 in New York City (then known as The American Musical and Dramatic Academy) by Broadway theater director and Shakespeare scholar Philip Burton based on “the belief that the actor, the singer, and the dancer would each greatly benefit from attending an intensive conservatory training program in which all students were taught the same integrated, multi-disciplinary curriculum” (Institutional Report page 5). The Academy first focused on Broadway musical comedy and was taught by theater professionals: actors, singers, dancers, directors, musical directors, and choreographers. This conservatory structure continues to this day, with artistic faculty coming primarily from the theatre and motion picture industries, and General Education (General Studies) faculty from academic disciplines holding various levels of degrees.

The Academy’s leadership was later assumed by David Martin as Artistic Director and Jan Martin as President. AMDA is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit institution. It received national accreditation with the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST) in 1984 and opened its Los Angeles campus in Hollywood in 2003. AMDA received approval by the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Vocational Education in 2004, and the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education for its four BFA programs in 2011.

The Institutional Report states that AMDA has a roster of over 400 full- and part-time faculty members, and over 160 full-time and 100 part-time staff members, located at both campuses. AMDA’s 2019 IPEDS survey reported a total fall semester student enrollment of 1,676 students (with 100 full-time and 219 part-time faculty members teaching in the fall 2019 semester), resulting in a reported student-faculty ratio of 9 to 1 (Institutional Report Supplement, Fall 2019 Student-Faculty Ratio).

Student enrollment appears to be adequate to successfully matriculate the BA, BFA, AOS, and Certificate programs, although some classes are stacked with different course levels (intro and intermediate students taught in the same course). A visiting team member observed a Directing class with students at different levels, and the faculty member utilized this student mix to provide mentoring opportunities to the

upper-term students and assistant opportunities to the lower-term students, a model consistent with the industry itself.

The Los Angeles Campus currently offers four Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) programs: Music Theatre, Acting, Dance Theatre, and Performing Arts; one Bachelor of Arts (BA) program: Theatre; and three Associates of Occupational Studies (AOS) programs: Music Theatre, Acting, and Dance Theatre. The New York Campus offers three Certificate programs: Musical Theatre, Studio Acting, and Dance.

On September 4, 2020, AMDA received Plan Approval from the NAST Commission for the following new programs: Master of Fine Arts (MFA) – 3 years: Writing for Theatre and Media; Master of Arts (MA) – 1 year: Theatre; Associate of Occupational Studies (AOS) – 2 years: Acting for Camera (LA Campus); Certificate – 2 years: Acting for Camera (NY Campus). Although not part of AMDA's current Institutional Report, the addition of two master's programs would suggest additional faculty resources will be necessary in the future.

AMDA's stated mission is:

AMDA provides rigorous, performance-based training and an industry-focused education experience; one that inspires excellence and prepares artists with an appreciation for the universal power of transformation through art. AMDA's educational philosophy is based on close collegial interaction between instructors and students — in class, in production, and through active mentorship.

AMDA is committed to providing an unsurpassed performing arts education to a diverse community of creative artists. AMDA serves as both school and stage, where students are given the support and opportunity to define their own personal objectives and to develop and refine their own distinctive artistic voices.

AMDA strives to create an environment for students to develop the skills, confidence, imagination, and power to contribute to their community as artists, entrepreneurs, visionaries, lifelong learners, and conscientious citizens of the world. Above all, AMDA wants to teach students that commitment and passion are the hallmarks of a successful and joyous career (AMDA Catalog, page 6).

The Visiting Team found that the Mission is understood by the full community and is deeply rooted in the institution's history and current decision-making. Faculty and students especially demonstrated a thorough understanding of AMDA's unique philosophy, pedagogy, and educational offerings.

AMDA received a Letter of Eligibility from the WSCUC Commission on June 11, 2019, that emphasized the following areas of concern: Criterion 6. Board of Directors' meetings best practices (CFR 1.1); Criterion 7: Governance and succession planning (CFR 3.8); Criterion 9. Institutional planning and research (CFRs 3.7. 4.6); Criterion 10: Degree program review and graduation data (CFR 2.2); Criterion 11: Assessment of student learning (CFRs 2.6, 2.7, 4.1, 4.2, 4.5); Criterion 13: Faculty governance (CFRs 2.4, 3.10, 4.4); and Criterion 14: Student success and diversity (CFR 2.13). AMDA has addressed most of these areas of concern, although only one of the four degree programs has completed program review to date: Acting, Spring 2020 (Institutional Report, page 12).

Site visits by team members were conducted on the New York campus (August 18-19, 2020) and the Los Angeles campus (September 8, 2020). Facilities appeared to be adequate for the delivery of instruction and student support, and administrative offices were assessable in nearby buildings if not integrated into the teaching/student housing facilities themselves. The dance studios in the NY campus were especially impressive, with high ceilings and abundant natural light. Upgrades to the facilities were underway in NY (new classrooms, new floors, additional electrical and security systems). Although some storage areas and performance spaces seemed limited in size, and general circulation was complicated due to the nature of the buildings themselves, there didn't appear to be any safety violations. Wayfinding was available in all academic facilities. A very comprehensive Facilities Strategic Plan was provided to the

visiting team, which outlines all of the various facilities resources, policies and procedures, and security protocols. IR Appendix – Attachment 4.6-D: Facilities Master Plan with Real Estate Asset Addendum.

AMDA also owns and maintains student housing in New York City and Los Angeles. One of the two student residence halls was visited in New York: The Stratford Arms Residence Hall. The Stratford Arms is held as a separate legal entity by AMDA, primarily as a result of when and how the property was acquired. It was previously a single-occupancy hotel — the building is older, rooms (singles and doubles) are small, lounges, limited food service, and food preparation facilities were available. At the time of the site visit, all but a handful of students had gone home due to Covid-19 closures; security and limited staff were still available. Although upgrades are continuing (a new outdoor lounge was recently added to the Stratford Arms), Student Satisfaction Surveys list some issues with student housing (condition, repairs, services). At the same time, alumni report a certain fondness of their time there, despite the difficulties.

The Los Angeles campus was equally impressive, with more than adequate classrooms and ample student housing. Multiple academic buildings, theaters, and residence halls are situated in close proximity near the heart of Hollywood. Most buildings are within walking distance of one another, and shuttle services are provided as well. All buildings are secure with either guards or card-swipe access, and the main academic and administrative buildings along with several residence halls are gated. Within the gated space there is parking and the campus café, which also serves as a performance space. Faculty office spaces are limited, but a spacious faculty lounge is provided that has computer workstations, faculty lockers, comfortable seating, and a full kitchen. Students have access to state-of-the-art classrooms for dance and theater, props and costumes, which are made to order per show on the premises. Students are employed to run shows, rather than necessitating stage-hand work as part of the program requirements. In this respect, and undeniably in their performance opportunities, students learn their profession authentically and experientially from many perspectives.

No courses have been held in person since the second week of March 2020. All administrative staff except for security and some facilities staff members have been working remotely, and all classes have shifted to Zoom meeting format, with faculty and students working (and performing) with one another in a

virtual space (all classes are also recorded). The shift to online instruction was accomplished by the faculty working with IT and other support staff in one week; all classes resumed in the latter part of March. At the time of the Virtual Visit, there was no published date for a return to in-person classes. Visiting team members observed online courses in which students were rehearsing with one another in real-time, with appropriate set and lighting conditions designed to facilitate physical blocking and performers' movement. Although a small number of non-essential staff have been furloughed, most of the institution's instruction and business practices have continued with these adjustments.

B. The Institution's Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 Report: Alignment with the Letter of Intent and Quality and Rigor of the Review and Report

The institution carefully organized its Institutional Report to remain consistent to the Letter of Intent. In addition, a detailed section addressed each of the Eligibility Letter's recommendations with references to detailed information in other sections of the report.

The AMDA Institutional Report was well written, clear, and addressed each of the WSCUC four Standards of Accreditation. The accompanying documents in the Appendix were equally thorough, well organized, and supported the content of the report. The Visiting Team also found their experience of the institution matched the report in overall tone and detail. There were 12 AMDA staff and board members on the AMDA WSCUC Institutional Committee, and six staff members on the WSCUC Steering Committee. WSCUC working groups were created around the following topics: Strategic Planning & Mission; Student Success; Teaching and Learning; and Student Learning Outcomes. All working groups included faculty and staff in equal numbers. Each of the working groups were given a list of specific CFRs to discuss, and later, to provide recommendations and draft sections of the report. Other members of the community, including students, were involved in the reading and editing of the draft report. The AMDA Board of Directors reviewed the final report during their June 30, 2020 meeting, before its submission to the WSCUC office.

The Report is self-reflective but did appear to lack rigorous future-focused observations for improvement. Despite this, the institution's responses to the Eligibility Review Committee Action Letter, as well as its

enthusiasm for the accreditation process in general, displayed an openness to improvement and change when necessary. Many new or expanded practices were established during this time, including more rigorous Program Learning Outcomes and Course Learning Outcomes, improved syllabi templates, a newly established five-year cyclical Program Review process with one program, Acting, undergoing full Program Review with faculty and outside evaluator participation. Faculty and students also appeared to be aware of, if not involved, in the Institutional Report process, and the entire institution appears to look forward to future WSCUC accreditation.

C. Response to Issues Raised in the Eligibility Review Committee Letter

AMDA's Institutional Report responded to the Eligibility Review Committee Letter in detail, IR pps.11-14. Below is a synopsis of their responses with other changes of note since approval for Eligibility:

Recommendation 1: Documentation of board meeting work (CFR 1.1, 1.7, 3.9)

Beginning with the first board meeting following the ERC letter (June 29, 2019), AMDA adjusted its board meeting minutes to provide a more detailed report of the board's work, including a more robust description of the Board's full engagement on each issue discussed. Most recent board minutes were provided to the team as part of a request for additional documentation (Institutional Report, pages 29-31). Three new board members were added since Eligibility, and new bylaws were written and approved. The team report explains a need for increased board focus on Academic Affairs in sections addressing Standard 1 and Standard 3.

Recommendation 2: Formalized and detailed responsibilities of the president (CFR 3.8)

A formalized, detailed description of the responsibilities of the CEO/President was produced and included in the Institutional Report (IR pages 90-92).

The Team observed that the CEO/President continues to have direct contact with staff members and that the current executive and staff organization charts contain inconsistencies and instances of multiple reporting responsibilities. The team report explains the need to review and revise governance and organizational structures to clarify reporting responsibilities in the section addressing Standard 3.

Organization charts included with the Institutional Report still had David Martin (Artistic Director) in some instances. Later organization charts did not include him. During the visit, various members of the institution explained that while David Martin was still engaged with faculty and students, he was no longer part of daily operations.

Recommendation 3: Formalized CEO succession plan (CFR 3.8)

The formal succession plan for the CEO was produced and included in the Institutional Report (Institutional Report, pages 90-92). The succession plan provided explained how the three executive positions support one another and what would occur should one or more of the executives leave their position for any reason. The plan did not go into detail as to how the CEO would be replaced should that need occur, short of stating that it would be the responsibility of the board to conduct a search for a replacement.

Recommendation 4: Formalized means to resolve conflicts of interest amongst leadership members (CFR 3.8)

The Institutional Report states that Jan Martin is the President and CEO and exercises, and will continue to exercise, final decision-making authority in all college matters. Regarding conflict of interest, AMDA officers and board members, and all employees comply with and sign a general conflict of interest policy that has been in place for many years. Board members sign this disclosure annually.

Recommendation 5: Curricula Vitae of all people in leadership roles (CFR 3.8)

Current Curricula Vitae for the CEO, Artistic Director, Chief of Staff, Chief Financial Officer, and Board Chair were included in the IR Appendices. CVs were also provided for the three new board members and the newly appointed provost.

Recommendation 6: Documentation of institutional effectiveness efforts (CFRs 3.7, 4.6)

AMDA has newly established initiatives for assessment and program review that include classroom observations, faculty and student evaluations, campus-wide faculty meetings, and feedback from industry

experts, coordinated between the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE), the Office of Education Services, Academic Department Chairs, and faculty. Program Learning Outcomes and Course Maps for three of the BFA programs, as well as the General Education department, were created (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.7).

Faculty and staff gathered assignment-based assessment data for this first pilot program at the end of the Summer 2019 term. The resulting quantitative analysis of assessment data was included in the Acting Department's Spring 2020 Program Review. This new program review practice is still in the process of closing the loop on changes suggested by the outcomes from the review (CFR 2.7).

The team report explains the importance for the institution to fully implement a faculty-driven assessment process to collect data on learning outcomes for effective program review; and build upon the initial work of Institutional Research to better collect, analyze and use data for program improvement (CFRs 4.5, 2.4). AMDA should create pathways to disseminate data analyses to improve evidence-based planning and decision-making, and build holistic mechanisms that involve key stakeholders, including faculty and program chairs and directors, in the planning and implementation of new program development, resource allocation, and improvement strategies (CFRs 4.1, 4.2, 4.6).

Recommendation 7: Detailed description of the use of institutional research in the planning process (CFR 3.7, 4.6)

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness, in its institutional research capacity, provides data on student enrollment, admissions, and the landscape of higher education to executive and senior leadership. The Office of Education Services also provides ongoing reports. These reports are reviewed by the executive team and used to adjust projects, policies, facilities, and faculty and staff recruitment and training.

Recommendation 8: Program reviews of each program (CFR 2.2)

AMDA has adopted a Program Review Guide to ensure a formal 5-year cycle for Program Reviews of each of its academic programs. The Acting Program concluded its first Program Review in Spring 2020. Other academic programs are to be reviewed in future years; one program per year.

Recommendation 9: The provision of data points aligned with higher education standards (CFR 2.2)

AMDA annually prepares reports for the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). A separate dashboard was developed for each program due to differences in clock hours (for the certificate programs) and credit hours (for the BFA and AOS programs). AMDA's OIE has developed and published a publicly available webpage for data relating to enrollment, retention, and graduation.

The Team observed that the data provided on the website, while thorough in scope, was difficult to find (because it is linked to the bottom menu rather than the main menu). There are links to two sets of data. One set of data is student performance data: <https://storage.amda.edu/media/documents/BPPE-Performance-Fact-Sheet-2017-2018-BFA-AOS.pdf?v=2.4.0.26> and the other is <https://www.amda.edu/amda-data>.

Recommendation 10: Clarification of data analysis in narrative form (CFR 2.2)

AMDA's Office of Institutional Research, with assistance from other members of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, the Office of Education Services, and in partnership with the Director of Liberal Arts Studies has produced narrative analyses of standard data sets. See Recommendation 9 above. Links to student performance data: <https://storage.amda.edu/media/documents/BPPE-Performance-Fact-Sheet-2017-2018-BFA-AOS.pdf?v=2.4.0.26> and the other is <https://www.amda.edu/amda-data>.

Recommendation 11: Evidence of learning outcomes assessment and program review planning in execution and analysis (CFRs 2.6, 2.7, 4.1, 4.2, 4.5)

AMDA is in the process of implementing revised and comprehensive assessment program review practices. AMDA's new program review process has reviewed only one program and is still in the process of closing the loop on changes suggested by the outcomes from the review (CFR 2.7).

Recommendation 12: Details of faculty engagement in the development of curriculum and learning outcomes (CFRs 2.6, 2.7, 4.1, 4.2, 4.5)

A set of program learning outcomes were formalized and revised in a faculty-consultation process less than a year ago, and for which the first assessments are currently being made. In General Education, that process appears to have happened this fall. AMDA faculty share syllabi provided to them by department chairs. Before the start of each semester, faculty are asked to review and, if there are changes needed, to revise existing syllabi.

AMDA generally engages with faculty at faculty meetings, which are conducted several times each semester on both campuses. The outcomes of these decisions inform curriculum and teaching. The agendas of these meetings are created by faculty (see Recommendation 14 below).

Recommendation 13: Descriptions of how Learning Outcomes (LO) data informs decision making (CFRs 2.6, 2.7, 4.1, 4.2, 4.5)

AMDA has implemented new assessment software to collect learning outcome data. A set of Program Learning Outcomes were revised in a faculty-consultation process less than a year ago, and for which the first assessments are currently being made. In General Education, that process appears to have happened this fall.

Recommendation 14: Evidence how faculty exercise authority through governance (CFRs 2.4, 3.10, 4.4)

AMDA faculty are involved in curricular development and institutional governance through their teaching responsibilities and participation on committees, in meetings, and through program reviews. Committees include the Faculty Liaison Committee (in New York), the Faculty Leadership Team (in Los Angeles), departmental, and faculty-wide meetings each semester on both campuses. All Faculty Liaison Committee and Faculty Leadership Team meetings are faculty-run and faculty-driven. Topics have included faculty conditions of employment and are reviewed by senior and executive teams. Notably, there is no organized faculty governance body, and most faculty engagements are comprised of department chairs and directors.

Recommendation 15: Update AMDA's diversity statement (CFR 1.4)

In response to WSCUC's updated Equity and Inclusion Policy, as well as student and faculty engagement, AMDA reviewed and updated its institutional policy and has adopted a new diversity statement. CFR 1.4. A diversity effort to be spearheaded by a new diversity officer is planned. Interviews of candidates were taking place at the time of our visit. The team report clarifies a need for the institution to create new and more rigorous processes to attract, hire, and retain a diverse faculty and staff, along with appropriate and ongoing faculty and staff development resources, in order to ensure a more inclusive and representative community as a whole (CFR 1.4).

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH WSCUC’S STANDARDS

Standard 1

Institutional Purposes (CFRs 1.1-1.2)

AMDA’s Mission Statement, cited in Section I.A., describes their students’ education as a “rigorous, performance-based training and an industry-focused education experience.” As with many conservatory or academy-based institutions, students with interest and aptitude in these practices seek opportunities to study with working professionals, who may or may not have traditional academic credentials, and who, as in this case, live and work in specific urban areas. AMDA has chosen to remain tied to the Broadway Theatre community, and with their move to Hollywood, California, to expand their focus on performance to include the movie industry. All students in both NYC and LA take courses in acting, dance, and music as part of their program of study, regardless of major. The curriculum and pedagogy support a project-based (or more accurately, script/production-based) learning model. Students work in pairs and in larger teams and are prepared to step into professional positions upon graduation.

When AMDA began offering BFA degrees on the LA campus, it also took on the responsibility of a full baccalaureate program, with General Education requirements and associated commitment for faculty with sufficient academic credentials. This work is ongoing, as evidenced by the General Studies Strategic Plan and Curricular Map (Institutional Report Appendix, Attachment 2.3-F: *GE Curriculum Map*). AMDA General Education faculty seek to connect their course content to their student’s degree program practices; when possible, whether in first-year English Composition courses, or in later year History, Psychology or Critical Studies courses, faculty address text (poetry, plays, scripts) and performance within a cultural framework.

Integrity & Transparency (CFRs 1.3-1.8)

AMDA provided, through its website and report appendices, materials demonstrating the existence and dissemination of sound policies. These include its policy on academic freedom, modeled on the American Association of University Professors Statement and located in the Faculty Handbook (CFR 1.3); its Diversity Statement and hiring policies (CFR 1.4); governing board bylaws (previous and recently revised)

(CFR 1.5); program requirements and policies regarding student grievances and complaints (CFR 1.6); financial audits (CFR 1.7); and records of previous communication with WSCUC (CFR 1.8).

AMDA's deep and genuine commitment to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion was evident in multiple interviews with campus constituents on every level, from the President, who speaks passionately on the topic, to the faculty and staff, to the alumni. AMDA is to be commended for intentionally and effectively enrolling and supporting a student population notable for diversity of race, gender, and sexuality; and for policies that articulate thoughtful support for, and sensitivity toward, diversity of gender expression and gender identity among both students and employees. Ongoing, formal development of faculty and staff literacy and sophistication with regard to race is nevertheless encouraged. For example, the team heard several mentions of an ideal of "colorblindness" during the visit interviews, which current anti-racist theory identifies as an approach prone to minimizing and dismissing genuine challenges and inequities in racial experience. In addition, more systematic disaggregation and analysis of student outcomes data by race should become routine as the institutional effectiveness and institutional research functions of the institution mature.

AMDA's leadership is aware that racial diversity of faculty, staff, and senior leadership lags behind that of the student body; this may in part be a result of the closeness of the AMDA community and the resulting habit of hiring and promoting internally and from among a limited group of the institution's alumni. More intentional recruitment practices for racially diverse faculty in particular, based on best practices in higher education for reaching and attracting underrepresented candidates, are needed. More formal policies for hiring committees and search processes should be developed to ensure equity and intentionality. The search for a Chief Diversity Officer that was at the interview stage during the team's visit should result in the appointment of one or more individuals with the expertise and authority needed to support these changes.

The team saw considerable evidence of an organizational structure characterized by regular, informal communication up and down supervisory chains and between units, which seems to work to general satisfaction (indeed, during the visit interviews one faculty member described it as "seamless"). However,

these organic organizational structures and relationships seem to be built less on clarity and logical division of area portfolios than on the particular skills and capacities of the individuals in senior leadership. Interviewees remarked that this system resists a tendency to silo, and functions very effectively through daily and weekly reporting. Notwithstanding this point, the team's concern was that some lines of command are unclear, differ from one AMDA campus to the other, and may result in conflict of interest, lack of accountability, or the distortion of some offices' primary roles because of how they report and the finite capacity of senior leadership. Student affairs was one such area of concern; financial aid was another. Some new gaps in the communication structure appear to have resulted from the recent stepping back of the co-founder and Artistic Director; these may be resolved by the recent appointment of a Provost.

Given that the new role of Provost had been created only a week or so before the team's site visit, it is to be hoped that solutions to some of the quirks of reporting structures will emerge as that role's authority and scope gain definition. The creation of this position will provide an opportunity to consider the reporting line of student affairs and student success, as well as oversight and leadership of academic programs and educational effectiveness.

Summary of Standard 1

Overall, the team finds that AMDA demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 1 at a level sufficient for Initial Accreditation, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination.

Standard 2

Teaching & Learning (CFRs 2.1-2.7)

The Institutional Report provides a clear picture of an institution with a highly focused professional mission, a dedicated administration and faculty, and a diverse and enthusiastic student body. The Institutional Report describes the academic programs in rich detail—highlighting an integrated, multi-disciplinary curricular approach and professionally-oriented philosophy.

The team was able to examine a substantial body of evidence supplied in the Institutional Report and its supporting materials. In particular, the team was able to look at evidence relating to progress on items identified in the action letter from the Eligibility Review Committee. When looking at teaching and learning, and scholarship, this evidence consisted of:

- program review data,
- evidence of learning outcomes assessment and faculty engagement in development of the curriculum and SLOs,
- descriptions of how learning outcome data informs decision making,
- documents relating to faculty governance,
- and assessments of educational effectiveness, as well as
- issues relating to diversity.

In addition, during the course of the visit, the team was able to interview members of the faculty and staff, representatives of the student body, a group of alumni, and the Board of Trustees. We also interviewed CEO Jan Martin, COO (and ALO) John Galgano, newly-appointed Provost (and acting Chair of General Education and Acting Director of Liberal Arts Studies) Michael Angotti, Director of Institutional Research Don Everhart, Director of Education – LA Barry Finkel, Director of Education – NY Heather Sieracki, Director of Education Services Cynthia Moj, Director of Academic Services Jenny Rhee, and all department chairs of both the NY and LA campuses.

The Institutional Report draws focused attention to the substantial student support services promoting student success—before and after graduation. It especially notes that learning outcomes are consistent and relevant to the performing arts industry. The visiting team agreed that these were, indeed, strengths of the institution relating to Standard 2.

The Institutional Report observes that assessing the co-curricular programs was an area that AMDA wished to address in greater depth, and that better communication of Program and Course Learning

Outcomes should be strengthened. The team also concurred that these are areas the institution's planned actions will strengthen.

In both the report and the visit, the team observed the extraordinary dedication the institution is demonstrating in its preparation for, and pursuit of, accreditation. Over the course of the last year, AMDA has built a substantial new infrastructure for overseeing its academic programs. Specifically, AMDA has done the following:

- enlarged its board with a new committee structure incorporating a broader purview, especially of academics, which was implemented in the month before the team visit (CFR 3.9);
- created a new executive leadership structure that moves from an artistic director model to one including an academic provost, which was in its first week of implementation when we visited (CFR 3.8);
- built an Institutional Research division that is being incorporated into the college structure (CFR 4.2);
- created a new program review process that has had one iteration (in the acting program) and is now in the process of closing the loop by implementing and incorporating changes suggested by the outcomes from the review (CFR 2.7);
- established a schedule for reviewing all programs has been established with a completion date of 2024 (CFR 2.7);
- developed a review process for co-curricular programs that appears to be recently implemented (CFR 2.11);
- Formalized a set of program learning outcomes in performance courses through a faculty-consultation process in spring 2019, against which the first assessments are currently being made (CFR 2.3);
- increased emphasis on hiring faculty with terminal degrees, particularly in general education (CFR 2.1);
- planned a diversity initiative that will be spearheaded by a new diversity officer (CFR 1.4); and

- Sought approval from The National Association of Schools of Theatre to begin offering graduate programs, which have NAST Plan Approval, meaning that AMDA can begin to recruit for an incoming class, although no immediate start date, capacity review or planning was presented to the team (CFR 2.2b).

All of these actions are important and highly commendable steps toward building a comprehensive and sustainable process for reviewing and continually improving its educational outcomes, as well as overall quality assurance. Members at all levels of AMDA expressed considerable will to speed these new processes toward maturity and spoke with near unanimity in support for the cultural and institutional changes being made. The team's evaluation of AMDA's compliance under Standard 2 is most thoroughly grounded in the institution's substantial achievement of creating these processes in a relatively brief timespan, but in recognition that more time would provide an opportunity to further expand compliance.

The degree programs are among the most professionally focused in the performing arts that team members have observed—certainly appropriate in their core content, and rigorous at the certificate, BA and BFA degree levels (CFR 2.1). Accreditation through the National Association of Schools of Theater supports the team observation of curricular coherence and thoughtful scaffolding of learning experiences (CFR 2.5). The faculty consists almost entirely of working professionals, which also contributes to rigorous outcomes.

It was the team's observation that the general education component, however, appears to lack comparable rigor and substance. It is not clear from curricular maps, class observations, or program learning outcomes that the General Education program has sufficient breadth and depth (CFR 2.2a). It appears that the General Education courses contextualize performance within their subject matter to such a degree that professional performing arts experience and careers were valued as faculty qualifications above terminal degrees or published scholarship in the general education disciplines themselves. During interviews in the course of the visit, performance faculty members spoke passionately and articulately about their dedication to building substantial critical inquiry, historical perspective and sociological understanding into their performance courses, but as far as the team could determine, these aspects are

not specifically built into the Student Learning Outcomes or Program Learning Outcomes for the performance division as they are in the General Education division, and are not being directly assessed yet. If it is the intent of the institution to integrate general education components into performance courses in the same way that the performance perspectives are integrated into general education courses, this will need to be reflected in the assessment and program review process.

It was also a concern to the team that only a minority of faculty hold terminal degrees in their fields, and many hold no degrees at all. The institution lists two dozen faculty members' credentials as "master performers" in lieu of degrees, but it was not clear by what process this determination was made or in what way this is considered equivalent to formal study. Upon request, AMDA supplied a sample of Faculty Expertise Forms, but these do not appear to address the question of equivalencies to degrees in the field. Faculty qualification seemed especially problematic in the General Education division, where only two of 26 faculty members hold doctorates according to the faculty list supplied to us at the time of the review (note: AMDA informed us during the visit that additional doctoral faculty were in the process of being added). In interviews, the Director of Education for Los Angeles Campus clarified that, because teaching skill is weighted above traditional scholarship in the faculty selection process, professional experience in the field of performing arts, which gives the teacher a particular understanding of AMDA's specialized students, is considered a form of equivalency even when the instructor does not teach performance. The Acting Director of General Education did make a specific note to the team that there is now a concerted effort to hire more General Education faculty members with terminal degrees, and that several had been hired after the faculty list was compiled and made available to the team. Even with this encouraging development, careful attention to building a sufficiently qualified faculty is warranted (CFR 2.1).

AMDA has established a new program review process. In Spring 2020, they completed one program review (of the Acting program) and have instituted a five-year cycle that will review all programs by spring 2024. Because this process is new, there has not been time to fully implement all findings from the first review. A second review is now underway in General Education (CFR 2.2).

The Eligibility Review Committee's action letter (Recommendation 12) focused on details of faculty engagement in the development of curriculum and learning outcomes. Initiatives to create and/or intensify faculty involvement have clearly begun but are still in very early stages. A strong groundwork has been laid by the Office of Education Services in cooperation with the Department Chairs. The Institutional Report suggests that these efforts have not yet spread to the general faculty, although in interviews the Provost indicated that the process of consulting the faculty to develop and refine learning outcomes was far more comprehensive and inclusive than faculty interviews suggested. The pandemic crisis and the move to emergency remote teaching, of course, have complicated all processes, and it seems plausible that the general faculty do not yet realize how seriously and fully their input was taken (CFRs 2.3, 2.4).

Primary assessment of student performance is at the heart of AMDA's new system, and AMDA has recently built a strong infrastructure for collecting and analyzing data from outcomes-based assessment. This system is so new, however, that it is not possible to say if CFR 2.6 is being met. It will take a few cycles before sufficiently robust data is available. It is worth noting that the institution has always had an end-of-semester review of final projects (which they call demos), and one of the initiatives in Institutional Research is to convert a decade of longitudinal data from paper forms into a database that will make comparisons available for continuous improvement efforts. The completion of that initiative means that AMDA might be able to augment their new system with existing data to speed the maturation of assessment efforts considerably.

As stated above, the institution is in the process of creating a robust system for program review and related outcomes assessment, and the steps they have taken are promising. Our visit, and interviews, suggest that the professional staff driving this process are making exceptional strides, but that meaningful faculty involvement is not yet in place—or at least not to the degree that the faculty fully realize. In interviews it appeared their impression is that the official process runs through the department chairs, and unless one takes particular initiative to insert oneself in the process, does not directly involve them beyond implementing the changes put in place by the Education office. Putting processes in place for producing data that would demonstrate AMDA is meeting CFR 2.7 is coming along well, but the results are not yet available.

The team commends the enormous strides the institution is making to establish the kind of comprehensive processes to assess and document the effectiveness of the teaching and learning that their anecdotal and legacy evidence suggests.

Scholarship & Creative Activity (CFRs 2.8-2.9)

AMDA has a long and thoroughly documented history of expecting and supporting creative activity from its performance faculty. There is an explicit expectation that they will be active arts professionals. There appears to be generous policies for scheduling and substitution in place to allow faculty to work in professional projects outside the institution. Creative work is also commissioned from faculty, and both students and faculty can use the Artists' Lab program as a creative incubator. There are also reimbursement policies (which seem almost unique to this institution) to cover the expense of attending performances to remain current about the New York and Los Angeles theater scenes. These are extraordinary measures that even many fully accredited WSCUC institutions struggle to implement (CFR 2.8).

The outcome of all studio courses is performance-based, so creative activity is visibly valued—even insisted upon, across the institution. At the same time, traditional scholarship appeared unrepresented in the evidence provided to the team, even among faculty members in the General Education division, where it would be the expected form of disciplinary involvement to “continue to develop their own talents” (Institutional Report, page 57). Policies about funding attendance at conferences and meetings of disciplinary organizations to present scholarly papers, talks, or panels theoretically apply to all faculty, but aside from regular attendance by New York faculty at pedagogically-orientation certifications (which most institutions would consider professional development, not scholarship), the team could find almost no incidents of any use of the funds or opportunities, by either the performance or general education faculty members. There is little evidence of widespread traditional scholarship amongst the faculty, nor support or encouragement of such scholarship (CFR 2.8).

Furthermore, faculty evaluation seems to require continuing professional-level creative activity but appears to be indifferent about all other forms of scholarship, even for instructors in the STEM fields and the humanities. This disparity should be addressed as a matter of equity, not to mention, as a matter of encouraging the liberal arts outcomes that a general education program—and specifically a BA degree—imply (CFR 2.8).

CFR 2.9 suggests that the institution should actively recognize and promote the linkages between scholarship (including creative activity), teaching, and service in the duties of faculty members, and that these linkages clearly contribute to student learning. The evidence provided to the team, however, did not directly address this concept. While admirable that all performance faculty members are also working professionals, this does not automatically translate into good teaching or student learning. Although we learned on our visit that professional performing arts experience among the General Education faculty (as opposed to research and scholarship in their teaching field) is viewed as fulfilling their scholarship even when they teach in other disciplines, it is not clear why this should be so, or that the effects of this policy in discouraging traditional scholarship were clear to the institution. (CFR 2.8)

The team inquired about the extent to which faculty members utilizing substitutes while they undertook extensive outside work might negatively impact student learning and classroom experience, but even when asked directly about this concern, no one associated with the institution (including students) indicated any problems with the policy. Although not an issue for the students participating in the interviews, the team encourages AMDA to develop a systematic effort to monitor this practice through outcomes assessment.

Faculty evaluation policies and procedures are the main means by which most institutions make explicit the expectations of levels of accomplishment in teaching, scholarship and service, as well as a coherent relationship between them in the professional development of individual faculty members. There may be other ways to address this, but members of the institution at all levels struggled to articulate how the institution recognized and encouraged this conceptual relationship at all. In fact, during our visit, in response to direct questions about shared governance, faculty evaluation, faculty promotion to Principle

Faculty, hiring committees and related matters, every response referenced the administrative hierarchy instead of the sorts of committee structures, governance bodies (like faculty senates), or curricular approval and review bodies common at most academic institutions. (CFR 2.9)

Student Learning & Success (CFRs 2.10-2.14)

In alignment with AMDA's mission, student progress to degree is facilitated by a flexible cohort model where students can matriculate at any of the three terms throughout the year (fall, spring, and summer). The cohort model helps to build a sense of community and "artistic cohesion" (IR, page 63), and the ability to start when ready is beneficial for transfer students and students with professional engagements. AMDA also provides an option to study throughout the year that optimizes training and reduces their time to degree by eliminating downtime. BFA students, for example, can complete their programs in three academic years as opposed to four, allowing them to move into professional life earlier. In addition, students can transfer in experiential credit from performances occurring outside the institution by submitting a portfolio for review an Education Review Board made up of faculty and staff. Tracking and reporting of student progress and success is reported through mandated data surveys and made available to campus through a variety of mechanisms. Student satisfaction is also measured, and to some degree, student characteristics are analyzed.

The majority of the student success reports provided by the institute were focused on enrollment, but a narrative report (developed in response to Recommendation 10 from the Eligibility Review Committee) provides a clear snapshot of student retention and graduation rates disaggregated by race/ethnicity and sex. The numbers of many of the demographic groups are too small to make meaning from the data, and race/ethnicity by sex was either not explored or not provided. Retention rates for first-time, first-year BFA-seeking students typically ranges between 75-80%, with 8-year absolute graduation rates averaging around 60%. Rates do differ among demographic groups, with possible concern for the small number of international students. It is unclear to the extent whether transfer students are flourishing in all groups as well. Transfer success is complicated by the three categories of students: External (students transferring in), Campus (between New York and Los Angeles campuses), and what the institution refers to as 5z Alumni (alums who are returning after completing a certificate or AOS). Apart from fluctuation due to small

numbers, overall rates appear to be relatively consistent over time. AMDA's newly implemented *Program Review Guide* calls for each program under review to analyze and interpret five years of retention and graduation rates. This has so far not been explored but would be beneficial for understanding differences between programs.

Student satisfaction is measured through AMDA's Campus Satisfaction Survey and somewhat indirectly, through one-on-one meetings and exit interviews conducted by the Office of Student Success. Results from the spring 2020 survey demonstrates that the need to transition to online classes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic was handled well by the institution. For example, less than 6% of the students surveyed stated that they did not have a successful semester. When students withdraw, the Office of Student Success conducts an in-person exit interview. The office recently established the practice of regular meetings with students one-on-one, reportedly within the first two semesters, and is preparing a new outreach program for students encountering academic challenges.

The team commends AMDA for their highly personal and individualized approach to students. As a diagnostic practice the one-on-one meetings and outreach program through the Office of Student Success are certain to benefit students. There remains a need, however, to expand institutional knowledge of student characteristics in order to make these meetings as effective as possible, and to lead to further improvements of the student experience. Neither the report nor the visit interviews demonstrated a strong, evidence-based understanding of how students are experiencing social climate on campus, for example, their individual sense of belonging within the community, their mental and physical health, and how these characteristics intersect with their identity and background to impact their academic progress and creative practice (CFR 2.10).

AMDA provides a wide array of student support programs and services directly aligned with the mission and goals of the institution. Faculty and librarians lead academic support offerings, such as one-on-one Writing Labs tailored to student needs, and bespoke information-literacy instruction aligned with general education learning outcomes. A holistic approach to academic advising is accomplished through a collaborative effort between the offices of Education Services, Student Success, and Student Affairs.

Education Services communicates proactively to keep students on track and develops an individualized academic plan when student fall behind. One-on-one advising is provided through Student Success, where staff are also trained to broach personal issues such as health concerns, personal issues, financial constraints, and other factors that could be impeding progress. As needed, students are referred to the professional staff in Student Affairs for further advocacy and counseling. Finally, AMDA's Center for Health and Performance, which provides core services for athletic performance, mental health, and vocal health, supports students with injury consultation and wellness screenings during their training, and prepares them for a healthy and sustainable career through programing focused on self-care.

The team appreciated seeing an example of the range of co-curricular programming from an edition of *AMDA Happenings*, the weekly newsletter distributed by Student Affairs. Events such as meetings of the Black Cultural Alliance, Poetry Night, Discussion with Kyle Scatliffe, Self-Defense Workshop, and an Alumnus Speaker Event show the richness of campus life. A primary focus within co-curricular programming, in the way AMDA conceives it, is on performance and professional opportunities. AMDA strongly believes that personal and professional growth is best achieved by their students through authentic, experiential learning opportunities such as: BFA Plays, BFA Musicals, Dance Workshops, Dance Concerts, Stage Readings, Musical Readings, Musical Intensives, Finding Your Voice Workshops, Choreography Workshops, Dialects, Raise the Barre, Café Performances, Film Performances, Division Showcases, Industry Showcases, Black Box Project, Artist Lab, and Project 15. Each production is assessed by the cast through the use of a pre and post Production Survey on opening and closing nights. The surveys are conducted by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and collect feedback from the cast about director, stage manager, musical director, choreographer, and other members of the production team, with the findings aimed toward individual and institutional improvements. The team commends AMDA for these extensive performance opportunities representing an integration between the curriculum and the co-curriculum to meet its performance-based and industry-focused mission.

While the team is highly impressed with AMDA's current efforts to ensure student learning and success, continued development and expansion is needed within student services, academic support, and co-curricular programming to establish a campus culture aligned with the institution's aspirations. For

example, existing curricular emphases on self-promotion and independent business skills, and co-curricular experiences mounting performances, are not fully supplemented by robust services and professional expertise in career counseling (CFR 2.13). In addition, increased opportunities for student engagement seem undeveloped in the areas of identity-based clubs and student government. Intercultural competency training was not listed as a component of new-student orientation, and there was no evidence of student training on such topics as implicit bias and microaggression. And finally, AMDA's campus-wide evaluation that receives and responds to reports about students of concern to should clarify and streamline its practices. The Institutional Report, for examples, states that faculty email staff in Student Affairs as needed, but during the visit interviews faculty discussed a weekly update provided to Program Chairs (Institutional Report, page 70).

Summary of Standard 2

Overall, the team finds that AMDA demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 2 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination.

Standard 3

Faculty & Staff (CFR 3.1-3.3)

Documents provided by AMDA include the Faculty Handbook, Employee Handbook, faculty rosters and qualifications, and policy documents regarding faculty status and committee structures. While some staff reporting lines appeared confusing to the team, staff as a whole seem appropriately qualified and resourced, student-centered, mission-aware, and committed to the institution.

As noted under CFR 1.4 above, more proactive recruitment and hiring practices will be needed to increase racial diversity among staff and, especially faculty, in order to meet AMDA's well-articulated goals in this area to more fully support the diverse student body.

AMDA faculty members appear devoted, student-centered, professionally active, and warmly collegial. From interviews, faculty seem to feel valued and supported by the institution. AMDA's policies value industry experience as potentially equivalent to academic qualification, which may be appropriate in some

disciplines and for a certain portion of the faculty. Yet again, increasing the number of faculty who hold terminal degrees would strengthen the BA programs and other academic areas. This will become especially important as AMDA adds graduate programs, in which grounding and currency in theory, as well as practice, is indispensable. Similarly, professional development funding should support faculty members in attending and presenting at academic conferences in their discipline, in order to bring current expertise and questions back into the classroom and into curricular discussions. During the visit, department Chairs spoke of valuing good teaching above formal qualifications when hiring new faculty members. The relative weighting of teaching, scholarship, and professional engagement for particular positions should be articulated clearly, in terms of both initial appointment and ongoing evaluation.

Faculty rights and responsibilities, as well as shared governance policies and processes, are relatively informal and exist primarily in practice rather than in articulated, written form. As such, they are heavily dependent on the continuity and goodwill of those who carry them out – both department Chairs and senior leadership. While this has served AMDA well to this point, best practice is for such policies and structures to be documented more fully in the Faculty Handbook as matters of mutual agreement and understanding. For example, the functioning of the Faculty Leadership Team and other processes and principles articulated in Attachment 3.1-E of the Institutional Report (Description of the Structure and Process Used for Faculty Governance) should be formally documented in either campus statutes or the Faculty Handbook. Similarly, the authority and responsibilities of department Chairs, as well as the circumstances under which they might be replaced, are not yet fully explicit. Again, the effectiveness of current Chairs and apparent ease of their relations with other faculty members depend on the individuals in question, rather than on clear structures and standards of accountability.

One potential path toward a more elaborated and formalized shared governance system was mentioned in meetings with the team: that the four working groups convened to prepare the Institutional Report (Strategic Planning & Mission, Student Success, Teaching and Learning, and Student Learning Outcomes) might become standing committees. This seems a reasonable avenue to explore. Regardless, a written understanding of the distinct roles of faculty, staff, and executive leadership in routine shared

governance and in strategic planning—as well as that of students, if appropriate, and the Board bylaws that already exist—is desirable to avoid potential overlap, conflict, and misunderstanding.

Fiscal, Physical & Information Resources (CFRs 3.4-3.5)

The team was provided with all relevant financial materials. The audits are clean and the financial resources available are adequate to support the academic mission of the institution. The enrollment management data, including retention and graduation rates, is posted online and used in the budgeting process in accordance with best practice. The CFO completes the budget each year, with no formal budget meeting or budget process outside of the Board review and approval. The institution refers to property holdings as a real estate endowment (documentation and meeting with the President and Board on September 9 and CFO on September 10); however, it is noted that the properties do not generate annual income for use toward operations or scholarship as would be seen from a traditional endowment. Rather, the value of the properties can be used in the future for financing. The team was not provided with details on how scholarship budgeting is performed, but it was described by the CFO as a figure used in the financial model between 21-25% which can be adjusted as needed. Institutional scholarships are granted in place of offering any tuition discounts, but no formal documentation around budgeting, awarding, and the appeal process for those scholarships was provided to the team (CFR 3.4).

Facilities and technology available seem sufficient to serve the student population at the institution. The institution has invested heavily in real estate properties used for student housing, classrooms, and performance spaces in both New York and Los Angeles. The team conducted site visits in New York and Los Angeles and were able to view many classrooms, performance spaces, and student housing locations. The performance spaces are very well-kept and ample and serve the academic mission. The institution has recently implemented Canvas as its new learning management system, which has proven even more beneficial given the pandemic. The new LMS is being integrated into the program review process as data becomes available using Via assessment software (CFR 3.5).

Organizational Structures, Decision Making (CFRs 3.6-3.10)

The institution has an independent board with diverse board members and is properly constituted to avoid conflict of interest. The board is a working board with heavy business and financial experience. The board evaluates the CEO annually (in June) against enrollment, financial, and faculty retention goals (CFR 3.9). The board has robust experience to support the institution and has recently added members and committee structures to improve governance, but evidence of this improvement will take time (CFR 3.6).

The team was impressed with the financial leadership at AMDA, based on the documentation provided and the meetings held. Tension between finance and enrollment management does not seem to exist, as admissions reports to the CFO and is very involved in financial aid decisions, specifically institutional scholarship awarding.

The institution has lines of authority mapped, and sometimes with multiple lines, and a strong strategic plan, however, the organizational structure should be reviewed with the new addition of the Provost/Chief Academic Officer position (CFR 3.7). The institution demonstrated open lines of communication throughout the institution, yet the team encourages AMDA to further clarify lines of authority. The institution has qualified individuals in the CEO and CFO roles, both who are long-serving and knowledgeable.

The team has some concern with the effectiveness of academic leadership by faculty. The documents provided and interviews held demonstrate no formal structures for academic leadership to provide input (CFR 3.10).

Summary of Standard 3

Overall, the team finds that AMDA demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 3 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination.

Standard 4

Quality Assurance Process (CFRs 4.1-4.2)

The Institutional Research function and office is relatively new at AMDA, but routine and extensive data-gathering has quickly been established. All units of the institution submit weekly reports to the President and Executive Team on retention, and admissions funnel figures, and faculty and staff report on a weekly basis about student progress and/or challenges. In addition, student course evaluation information is gathered twice a semester. The new Learning Management System will make some forms of student and faculty data easier to gather and review. Institutional research resides within the Office of Educational Effectiveness, which is also responsible for coordination of assessment, supporting institutional planning, program review, and required compliance reporting.

Program review is at an initial stage. AMDA has developed a well-designed Handbook that includes all appropriate elements, however, only one of their degree programs have undergone program review at this stage. Completing a full cycle of program reviews will provide AMDA faculty, staff, and leadership with more substantive and holistic information on the institution's strengths, areas for improvement, and growth opportunities.

With regard to student learning assessment, in interviews faculty appeared to have great clarity on standards and processes for assessing individual students' learning and performance, but less familiarity with how that evaluation process might feed into regular and systematic reflection on the program pedagogy and structure. The team considered this understandable in the context of an emergent program review process, but noted that at present, reflection on curricula is mostly confined to Department Chairs. The process for the development of new curricula and programs appears ad hoc; curricular revisions may arise from faculty suggestions (proposing new courses according to demand or their expertise) or from Chairs. New programs seem to be developed collaboratively, but with initial impetus coming from senior leadership. The team did not see a policy or process document for the development of new programs or the elimination of existing degree requirements or programs.

Some student outcome data on the public website was confusing to the team in its presentation, in part because of the thorough level of detail at which it is presented. For example, it would be useful to see headcount, retention rates, and time-to-degree by campus or even institution-wide, in addition to these

data by student program and location. Public data is transparently disaggregated by race and gender, and in general, the institution appears highly responsive in its quality assurance processes through transparent gathering and presentation of data.

Institutional Learning & Improvement (CFRs 4.3-4.7)

AMDA's planning process runs on a five-year cycle and reportedly engages faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the board. Description of the process for the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan shows a standard approach beginning with data collection such as campus surveys, external scanning, and a strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats (SWOT) analysis. The resulting strategic priorities are directly aligned with the results of the SWOT (such as student enrollment and success, equity and diversity, program quality, and institutional resources), and were further elaborated in sector-specific plans that include an Academic Strategic Plan, Fiscal Strategic Plan, Information Technology Strategic Plan, Library Strategic Plan, and Facilities Master Plan.

In addressing challenges in the current and anticipated higher education landscape the Institutional Report focused primarily on recruitment and space. The SWOT analysis revealed specific threats with respect to peer competition and marketing, and AMDA has developed multiple tactics to address them. In addition, the SWOT analysis pointed to space constraints as an ongoing challenge on both campuses. This is due not only to the cost of real estate, but equally to types of spaces needed for dance and theater. Student housing is also in high demand, and based on historical trends on both campuses, AMDA has calculated that approximately 75% of their total student body has a need for housing. Current spaces provide nearly this much capacity, but with the addition of new programs more space will soon be needed. The team strongly encourages more data collection, analysis, planning, and implementation on these topics if the institution is to meet its strategic goals of expanding international enrollment and the opening of new Certificate, AOS, BFA, MA, and MFA programs.

While the institution's planning processes are very robust in terms of its design, regularity, collaborator ambitions with all stakeholders, and implementation scope, throughout the visit the team noted that more emphasis could be placed on measuring and reporting progress for the AMDA community. The plan

states that an “annual review and assessment of progress will be conducted to determine effectiveness of implementation in all areas”, yet no progress reports were shared. A well-conceived implementation matrix is provided with the plan that outlines ownership, timelines, and key performance indicators, but these appear to have been done as part of the planning process, and not revisited. In the next planning exercise (i.e., 2023-2028), the team strongly encourages AMDA to develop a mechanism to ensure that progress can be measured and reported (CFR 4.6).

Summary of Standard 4

Overall, the team finds that AMDA demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 4 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination.

SECTION III. PREPARATION FOR ACCREDITATION UNDER THE 2013 HANDBOOK OF ACCREDITATION

Degree Programs: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees

The team noted that the institution is in the emerging stages of building a substantial infrastructure of assessing and ensuring the meaning, quality and integrity of its degrees. We have every expectation that, when it reaches maturity, this infrastructure will be sufficient to meet the process expectations inherent in this topic. The robust system that is being implemented described under Standard 2 is absolutely the appropriate course for the future. The collection of initiatives represents a significant cultural shift from the institution’s history as a certificate-granting conservatory. In our opinion, they constitute bold steps to ensure the institution’s future through greater participation in, and interchange with, the higher education community.

Educational Quality: Core Competencies, and Standards of Performance at Graduation

AMDA’s General Education curriculum is structured explicitly around the core competencies of written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking. The General Education program learning outcomes elaborate on these competencies and a curricular map tracks where each is introduced, developed, and strengthened in the General Education sequence. These outcomes are articulated in course syllabi. The institution plans to undertake program review for the

General Education program beginning in spring 2021, although gathering of assessment data appears to be in early stages. Standards of performance at graduation have been established by consultation with both internal (faculty) and external (industry professional) parties. Assessment of individual students' cumulative accomplishment at graduation appears to be well-established and comprehensive through performance assessments discussed collectively among program faculty and industry showcases.

Sustainability: Preparing for the Changing Higher Education Environment

The team noted that the institution is preparing for the changing higher education environment. The institution has revenue generation aside from tuition and room and board, which includes a summer camp program for high school students. The institution is working with the Board on additional revenue generation ideas to maintain sustainability while ensuring alignment with the mission. The institution is able to draw on equity held in their properties, either for expansion of more property purchases, creation of an investment endowment, or general use funds. The institution has also provided training to faculty, staff and students in order to transition courses to a remote format when necessary, as occurred with the current pandemic.

SECTION IV. INVENTORY OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS INDICATORS

The state of AMDA's efforts summarized in the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators is discussed at length within the Institutional Report and the team report under Standard 2 and Standard 4. All programs have learning outcomes that are made available to students, and a regular program-review cycles has been set up. Although only one program has been reviewed thus far, the team expects that the institution will maintain its stated program review schedule, improving upon its process as it continues to learn from these experiences. Faculty interviews during the visit suggest the need to involve more faculty in the development of assessment tools (such as rubrics), the setting of standards of excellence for program assessments, and the interpretation and meaning making of assessment results.

SECTION V. FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The team has seen that AMDA has considered the WSCUC Standards and CFRs, and has developed new policies, practices and systems in response to those standards. Their report, together with the

additional documents and interviews, have led us to understand your efforts and to assess your strengths as well as areas of focus for continuous improvement.

Commendations

The team commends AMDA College of the Performing Arts for the following:

1. Deep understanding and commitment throughout the AMDA community of the college's institutional mission and values;
2. Dedication to the accreditation process evidenced through an honest and transparent approach to the Institutional Report, all related materials, and the meetings conducted during the Accreditation Visit;
3. Unwavering leadership with a long-standing commitment for the institution demonstrated by current stability and growth;
4. Strong sense of collaboration and collegiality amongst staff and faculty and their collective efforts to fully support students and the vision of the Institution;
5. Long-standing commitment of the Board of Directors to the financial health of the institution, and for their interest in expanding both the governance roles and the membership of the board to better serve the institution in the future;
6. Institutional commitment to recruiting and supporting a diverse and engaged student body;
7. Commitment of the faculty toward an innovative integration of the performing arts within the curriculum to establish a cultural voice for change, and for encouraging students to develop their own unique voice for change;
8. Dedication to the concept of the performer-athlete through programs and services supporting the emotional and physical health of AMDA's students;
9. Commitment to supporting professional opportunities for staff and faculty, allowing for the freedom to pursue their own creative and artistic projects with an assurance of continued institutional engagement, and in doing so, allowing them to bring current, industry-specific standards and practices into the classroom;

10. And finally, the rapid and thorough response to COVID-19 by the entire community, the speed with which it adapted to the ensuing closure, and to the ongoing care for student, staff, and faculty health and safety.

Recommendations

Standard 1

Overall, the team finds that AMDA demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 1 at a level sufficient for Initial Accreditation, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination.

The team has identified the following recommendations for on-going and future efforts:

CFR 1.4: Create new and more rigorous processes to attract, hire, and retain a diverse faculty and staff, along with appropriate and ongoing faculty and staff development resources, in order to ensure a more inclusive and representative community as a whole.

CFRs 1.7, 3.7: Clarify and simplify governance and reporting structures across the full institution to better reflect the functions of those departments and their respective responsibilities, especially those for all academic and associated student-facing departments (Student Affairs, Advising, Production, etc.), in order to clarify the new role of the provost.

Standard 2

Overall, the team finds that AMDA demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 2 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination.

The team has identified the following recommendations for on-going and future efforts:

CFR 2.2a: Expand curricular offerings, aligned with institutional and program learning outcomes, in order to enrich the breadth and depth of the general education program.

CFR 2.2b: Apply all requirements and standards currently used for the undergraduate program to new graduate programs that have been approved by NAST.

CFR 2.7: Make substantial progress toward the completion of program reviews for all degrees.

CFRs 2.8, 3.3: Provide support for faculty development and scholarship to bring innovative ideas back to the institution to develop a broader and more academically-oriented experience for students.

CFRs 2.9, 3.2: Codify practices for ongoing evaluation, promotion, and status of all faculty members.

Standard 3

Overall, the team finds that AMDA demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 3 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination.

The team has identified the following recommendations for on-going and future efforts:

CFRs 3.1, 2.1: Build and implement practices to recruit and hire qualified faculty with terminal degrees (or scholarship/publishing equivalencies) to support AMDA's increased responsibilities of general education within the BA, BFA, and proposed MA and MFA degrees.

CFR 3.4: Develop budget and planning strategies that include collaborative integration with department chairs and division directors to ensure effective short- and long-range support of ongoing programming and new initiatives.

CFR 3.9: Continue to build capacity for Board oversight through the newly formed committee structure and expand expertise for greater support for academic and campus affairs.

CFR 3.10: Build structures and practices for faculty to have a larger governance role in developing academic policy, curriculum, and pedagogical innovations.

Standard 4

Overall, the team finds that AMDA demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 4 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination.

The team has identified the following recommendations for on-going and future efforts:

CFRs 4.5, 2.4: Fully implement the faculty-driven assessment process in order to collect data on learning outcomes for effective program review; build upon the initial work of Institutional Research to better collect, analyze and use data for program improvement.

CFRs 4.1, 4.2, 4.6: Create pathways to disseminate data analyses to improve evidence-based planning and decision-making, and build holistic mechanisms that involve key stakeholders, including faculty and program chairs and directors, in the planning and implementation of new program development, resource allocation, and improvement strategies.

APPENDICES

The team verified AMDA's compliance with WSCUC and federal Credit Hour and Program Length requirements. Compliance was verified by a review of the institution's Catalog, publicly posted policies, Credit Hour and Program Length Review Form, sample syllabi provided, and interviews with campus constituents.

The team verified AMDA's compliance with WSCUC and federal Transfer Credit Policy requirements. Compliance was verified by a review of the institution's Catalog, publicly posted policies, Transfer Credit Policy Review Form, and interviews with campus constituents.

FEDERAL COMPLIANCE FORMS

OVERVIEW

There are four forms that WASCUC uses to address institutional compliance with some of the federal regulations affecting institutions and accrediting agencies:

- 1 – Credit Hour and Program Length Review Form
- 2 – Marketing and Recruitment Review Form
- 3 – Student Complaints Form
- 4 – Transfer Credit Policy Form

During the visit, teams complete these four forms and add them as an appendix to the Team Report. Teams are not required to include a narrative about any of these matters in the team report but may include recommendations, as appropriate, in the Findings, Commendations, and Recommendations section of the team report.

1 - CREDIT HOUR AND PROGRAM LENGTH REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulations, WASCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's credit hour policy and processes as well as the lengths of its programs.

Credit Hour - §602.24(f)

The accrediting agency, as part of its review of an institution for renewal of accreditation, must conduct an effective review and evaluation of the reliability and accuracy of the institution's assignment of credit hours.

(1) The accrediting agency meets this requirement if-

(i) It reviews the institution's-

(A) Policies and procedures for determining the credit hours, as defined in 34 CFR 600.2, that the institution awards for courses and programs; and

(B) The application of the institution's policies and procedures to its programs and coursework; and

(ii) Makes a reasonable determination of whether the institution's assignment of credit hours conforms to commonly accepted practice in higher education.

(2) In reviewing and evaluating an institution's policies and procedures for determining credit hour assignments, an accrediting agency may use sampling or other methods in the evaluation.

Credit hour is defined by the Department of Education as follows:

A credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than—

(1) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or

(2) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Credit Hour Policy.

Program Length - §602.16(a)(1)(viii)

Program length may be seen as one of several measures of quality and as a proxy measure for scope of the objectives of degrees or credentials offered. Traditionally offered degree programs are generally approximately 120 semester credit hours for a bachelor's degree, and 30 semester credit hours for a master's degree; there is greater variation at the doctoral level depending on the type of program. For programs offered in non-traditional formats, for which program length is not a relevant and/or reliable quality measure, reviewers should ensure that available information clearly defines desired program outcomes and graduation requirements, that institutions are ensuring that program outcomes are achieved, and that there is a reasonable correlation between the scope of these outcomes and requirements and those typically found in traditionally offered degrees or programs tied to program length.

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.amda.edu/amda-policies
	Comments: AMDA has both clock hours (for NY certificate programs), and credit hours.
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
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:
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? 3
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? On-ground
	What degree level(s)? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Dance, Theater
	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 syllabi or equivalent for other kinds 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>	How many syllabi were reviewed? 2
	What kinds of courses? Dance "labs"
	What degree level(s)? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Dance
	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? 1
	What kinds of programs were reviewed? Degree
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Theater
	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
	Comments:

Review Completed By: Brian Harlan
Date: 9-14-20

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? <input checked="" 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"/> NO
	Comments:

*§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: Brian Harlan

Date: 9-14-20

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? Yes, easily accessible through the Policies page: https://www.amda.edu/amda-policies
	Comments:
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:
	If a student decides to file a complaint, they must do so in writing to the appointed academic administrator. Any such written complaint must be received by the administrator no later than forty-five calendar days after the student first became aware of the facts which gave rise to the complaint. The administrator should conduct an informal investigation as warranted to resolve any factual disputes. The administrator may appoint an impartial fact-finding panel to conduct an investigation. The administrator must state the terms and conditions of the investigation in a memorandum appointing the fact-finding panel. A fact-finding panel appointed shall have no authority to make recommendations or impose final action. The panel's conclusions shall be limited to determining and presenting facts to the administrator in a written report. Based upon the report of the fact-finding panel if any, the administrator shall make a determination and submit his or her decision in writing to the student and to the person alleged to have caused the complaint within ten calendar days of receipt of the panel's report. The written determination shall include the reasons for the decision, shall indicate the remedial action to be taken if any, and shall inform the student of the right to seek further review.
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Records	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where?
	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: AMDA provided an example tracking spreadsheet of how they collect and monitor complaints to resolution.
	Comments:

*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)

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

Review Completed By: Brian Harlan

Date: 9-14-20

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)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, is the policy publically available? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where? Policies page: https://www.amda.edu/amda-policies
	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
	Comments:

*§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: Brian Harlan
Date: 9-14-20