

# **REPORT OF THE WSCUC VISITING TEAM**

## **SEEKING ACCREDITATION VISIT 2**

For Institutions Seeking Initial Accreditation

To: Pacific College

Dates of visit: October 14-16, 2015

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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 WASC 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

Pacific College is a for-profit institution, founded in 1993, that currently offers certificate and Associate of Science programs in Vocational Nursing (VN) and a new completion program for Registered Nurses to earn the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN to BSN). The main campus is located in Costa Mesa, with satellite campuses in Inland Empire and in Los Angeles (Citadel). The primary clientele are working adults of under-served ethnicities, to whom the College offers professional education during evenings and weekends and at a reasonable cost. In Fall 2014, total enrollment in the VN programs was 274, while total enrollment in the RN to BSN program was 52.

The mission of Pacific College, adopted in 2013, is that “Pacific College is committed to providing the highest standards in education by striving to foster a continuous process of intellectual growth, character development, and academic integrity to achieve professional and personal success in the student’s chosen profession.” Its vision is that “Pacific College is recognized as a progressive learning environment where the values of professionalism, altruism, collaboration, and a sense of personal and professional identity are the primary objectives for inclusion as a member of a global and diverse community.” The mission and vision, broad enough to encompass both current and future programs, were developed by Board members, administration, external stakeholders, faculty, staff, and students.

Pacific College’s two vocational programs have been approved by California Bureau of Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE) and accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC). The institution also has received approval from the previously mentioned bodies for the new AS-RN program, planned for March 2017. The RN to

BSN program is accredited by the ACCSC and the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). The new RN program provides a pathway for VN graduates to proceed to the baccalaureate.

Pacific College was granted eligibility by the WSCUC Eligibility Review Committee panel (ERC) in July 2012 for a period of four years. In March 2013, the College's letter of intent to apply for Candidacy was approved, and the CPR for Candidacy visit occurred in January 2014. The College received the site team's report with recommendations in March 2014.

The October 2015 visit was the second visit for Candidacy. The site team was able to access attachments to the report online well before the visit, and then requested and received numerous additional documents as well as access to the College website and to online courses. These were made available both online and in print in the team room. During the site visit, team members met with the President, Board of Directors, Vice President and CFO, Vice President of Instruction, Director of Institutional Improvement and Planning, Director of Student Services and professional staff, the Director of Distance and Blended Learning, Director of Informational Technology Services, the directors of the VN and RN to BSN programs, and numerous VN and RN to BSN students and faculty. Other meetings were with community members, including representatives from hospitals and other agencies where current students have clinical experiences and where graduates are employed. The site team found the visit invaluable in demonstrating the strongly student-centered philosophy and practices of all faculty, staff, and administrators.

B. The Institution's Report: Quality and Rigor of the Review and Report

The institutional report was logically organized; following the introductory section,

section II described the institution's responses to the 2014 site team's recommendations, and section III presented adequate descriptions of the institution's efforts to comply with each CFR and brief statements of next steps. These efforts were verified during the site visit. In reporting the numerous changes it has undertaken, the institution acknowledged that it had wholeheartedly embraced the Standards and was working efficaciously to meet them. On the basis of the thoroughness and alacrity with which Pacific College has taken appropriate action, the site team has concluded that the institution is committed to transforming itself in accordance with WSCUC expectations.

The depth of detail in all sections indicated that administrators at all levels and in all departments contributed to the institutional report. For Standards One and Two, for example, faculty presented the results of their recent work on "development of a program mission, philosophy and outcomes aligned with the College mission and professional standards; addition of grading rubrics; use of innovative teaching strategies using technology; revision of College policies and procedures to account for providing education at the baccalaureate level" (Institutional Report, page 6).

The evidence presented in the report with regard to previously problematic areas was strongly supported during the site team's document review and on-campus interviews. However, the site team noted that the report relied primarily on narrative and references to appended documents, and that it was weakened by a paucity of data. In its discussion of Standard Four, the site team discusses the need for the institution to improve its analysis and display of data, and to extend its use of data in decision-making.

### C. Response to Issues Raised in 2014 Commission Letter

The institution has adhered closely to the recommendations of the 2014 team, endorsed

by the WSCUC Staff Liaison in the March 31, 2014 letter to the institution. The recommendations and the nature of the institution's responses are presented below.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Institution's Response</b>
<p>1.1: That assessable institutional learning outcomes be developed that grow out of and subsume broad program learning outcomes and that incorporate the five core competencies in written and oral communication, information literacy, quantitative reasoning, and critical thinking that, as of 2013, the Commission expects accredited institutions to document.</p>	<p>The institution has developed such institutional, program, and course outcomes and has incorporated the five core competencies into these outcomes.</p>
<p>1.2: That the College include on its website a well-organized repository of policy statements, together with procedures and forms, accessible to students, faculty, staff, and, as appropriate, the public; and that it ensure that faculty, student, and staff handbooks display relevant policies and procedures in clear and appropriate language and format .</p>	<p>The institution has hired a company to redesign its website and is in the process of populating it with the information specified in the recommendation.</p>
<p>1.4: That the College consider appointing an individual to be responsible for ensuring clarity and standardizing format of key documents, including policy statements, the College catalog, handbooks, and web postings (e.g., reducing redundancy and confusing wording, providing table of contents and indices for lengthy documents).</p>	<p>A part-time editor has been rewriting and reformatting policy statements, the College catalog, handbooks, and other important documents. This is viewed as an ongoing project.</p>
<p>1.3: That the academic freedom policy include a more detailed explanation of academic freedom; that it be extended to include staff and be published in the Staff Handbook; and that the policy and a clear</p>	<p>The institution's academic freedom policy is now more explicit and is posted in the student, faculty, and staff handbooks as well as in the College catalog. The policy and procedures for complaints and reports of</p>

<p>description of procedures for complaints or reports of perceived violations of academic freedom be posted on the College website.</p>	<p>violations must next be posted on the College website.</p>
<p>2.1: That all faculty and co-curricular staff be involved in developing a system of scheduled, meaningful and sustainable assessment of student learning for academic programs and co-curricular programs, consistent with the Commission's expectations; and that it provide appropriate training, support, and leadership in assessment practices.</p>	<p>The Director of Instruction has developed a set of presentations on pedagogy and learning assessment, to be posted on the faculty area of the College website. The ATI (VN) and Pearson (RN to BSN) systems provide additional support of a generalized nature. Faculty meetings include discussions of assessment strategies and results.</p>
<p>2.2: That a standardized process be established for evaluating transcripts for transfer courses, including the use of transfer tables, and responsibility for evaluation be delegated to the Office of the Registrar</p>	<p>The College registrar is now responsible for evaluating transfer credits, and transfer tables have been established.</p>
<p>3.1: That faculty and administrators be hired with earned doctorates and experience in baccalaureate and higher degree institutions.</p>	<p>Two new administrators have been hired who have doctorates and administrative experience at baccalaureate-granting institutions. Seventy-five percent of the RN to BSN program faculty hold doctoral degrees, with the remainder having MS degrees in nursing.</p>
<p>3.2: That standing institution-wide faculty committees be established on curriculum review, assessment, and academic policy.</p>	<p>There are faculty curriculum committees for both the VN and RN to BSN programs. As the RN to BSN program matures and expands, and the RN program is added, faculty committees on assessment and academic policy will be feasible.</p>
<p>3.3: That the College offer regularly scheduled training for administration, faculty, staff, students on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), sexual harassment, emergency preparedness and response, and other mandated practices.</p>	<p>The College offers training in these areas for faculty, staff, and students.</p>

<p>3.4: That the College ensure that students, faculty and staff can easily and reliably access the internet on all campuses.</p>	<p>The three campuses are being fit with fiber optics for improved internet speed and service.</p>
<p>3.5: That an emergency notification system be implemented immediately that is consistent with federal guidelines.</p>	<p>An emergency notification system compliant with federal guidelines is now in place.</p>
<p>3.6: That the roles of the president and CFO be separated, and that the College fully develop the accounting function, and assure accurate and timely monthly and annual financial statements comparing actual performance to budget.</p>	<p>The vice president now serves as CFO, and a part-time accountant has been hired. Monthly and annual financial statements are prepared, and changes to the budget are tracked.</p>
<p>3.7: That a formal budgeting process be implemented with the board oversight and board approval of the annual budget, and documented tracking of changes to the budget after it is approved.</p>	<p>The board of directors reviewed and approved the 2015 annual budget and receives monthly reports comparing budget to actual performance.</p>
<p>3.8: That the board of directors appoint additional members with expertise in complementary areas, such as law, insurance or baccalaureate and higher degree education; and appoint members representing the diversity of the community and the students served by the College.</p>	<p>A new member has been added to the board of directors, with two more to be added when they have retired from their present positions. One is a woman. What remains is to increase the ethnic diversity of the board.</p>
<p>3.9: That the board of directors fully deploy the committee structure.</p>	<p>Three board committees have been formed: Finance, Audit and Academic Affairs. The Finance and Academic Affairs Committees are just beginning to function.</p>
<p>3.10: That the board of directors appoint an external member to the board audit committee. It is further recommended that the audit committee select and appoint the auditors.</p>	<p>The Audit Committee has been appointed but has not yet met. The chair is committed to meeting and to fulfilling the stated functions.</p>
<p>4.1: That the College continue to develop its data reporting system and broaden expertise</p>	<p>The College is still in the early stages of learning to use its new SonisWeb student</p>

<p>in extracting and analyzing data, and in presenting findings in language and visuals that students, faculty, and the public will find meaningful.</p>	<p>information and data system. The 2015 site team has recommendations on this matter.</p>
<p>4.2: That the College continue reporting current aggregated and disaggregated data for race and ethnicity and add disaggregated reports by campus to determine patterns in unequal outcomes.</p>	<p>See discussion in Standard Four.</p>
<p>4.3: That the College develop valid, reliable instruments for surveys of student satisfaction, using the standard five-point likert scale.</p>	<p>The College has developed a new student satisfaction survey using a six-point likert scale.</p>

## **Section II. EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE STANDARDS**

The site team finds that Pacific College is in substantial compliance with the four standards. There are some areas where improvement is called for; these are being addressed by the institution. As well as a plethora of documents provided by the College, conversations during the site visit with the school's executives, board of directors, professional staff, faculty, students, and the community have convinced the team that the entire institution is committed to meeting WSCUC expectations for the structures and processes required for excellence in teaching and student learning.

Much has been accomplished by Pacific College since January 2014, when the CPR visit for candidacy occurred. The online RN to BSN program has been accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education. The College has gained a number of highly qualified administrators and faculty leaders; has specified institutional and program learning outcomes and aligned these with the WSCUC core competencies; is using its new online student information system for planning and monitoring; and is reshaping key aspects of its organization and governance, including the budgeting process and the roles of the Board of Directors. Thus, in response to the 2014 team report and recommendations, and propelled by its own momentum and aspirations, the institution has moved forward on all fronts.

### **Standard One. Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives.**

The site team finds that Pacific College is in substantial compliance with Standard One. The institution has a clear sense of mission and its place in the higher education cosmos of the Los Angeles region, for the VN program, and for registered nurses from across the country seeking the BSN online. It has tailored its curricula, course scheduling, locations, student

services, and tuition to the goal of bringing nursing education to adults who are already working in the field and who aspire to advancement through further education. It has engaged all members of the College community and other stakeholders in discussions of mission, accreditation efforts, and institutional and program outcomes.

The College demonstrates integrity and transparency in all key areas: program information to students and the public; policies and procedures including those relating to academic freedom and formal complaints; operational and fiscal practices; and communications with WSCUC.

### Institutional Purposes

Pacific College has formally approved statements of mission, vision, purpose and values (CFR 1.1). The mission and values statements are posted prominently throughout the campus. More importantly, it was evident to the site team that the institution's educational mission and values drive all planning, decisions large and small, and guide the everyday life and work of the entire institution (CFR 1.1, 1.5).

Pacific College has developed and promulgated institutional learning outcomes and program learning outcomes that embed the expectations of professional nursing organizations and the five WSCUC core competencies (CFR 1.2). These are integrated into program planning and design, and are displayed in program descriptions on the College website, at various sites on campus, and in the VN and the RN to BSN syllabi. Course learning outcomes are displayed in VN and RN to BSN syllabi. The College website, now being redesigned, will include public access to information on learning outcomes and student performance, including retention and graduation data (CFR 1.2).

## Integrity and Transparency

The College has developed all of the policies and procedures essential to the integrity of the institution in its dealings with students, faculty, and staff: these include academic freedom, appropriate conduct, formal complaints, accommodations, diversity, and emergency procedures (CFRs 1.3, 1.4, 1.6). On the College's website are the requisite postings for completion rates and gainful employment data (CFR 1.6). Students report that all dealings with them have been frank and above-board. The College's "Problem Resolution and Grievance Procedure" was reviewed, along with the form used to file a complaint. According to the institution's log of all formal complaints since 2010, including the substance and date of each complaint and its resolution, student academic complaints are addressed promptly and equitably. The Director of Student Services and the Vice President of Instruction have an open-door policy with respect to students; students themselves reported being able to talk to them freely, to be listened to respectfully, and to have their concerns addressed promptly (CFR 1.7).

The institution adheres to sound business practices (CFR 1.7). The finances of the College are audited each fiscal year by an independent certified public accounting firm, and the Team reviewed the financial statements and independent auditors' reports since the last site visit. The firm that conducted the audits has a clear license in the state, as does the lead partner on the account. The Team spoke with the firm's partner, and verified that no problems were encountered by the firm in the execution of the audit. Additional details and recommendations for improvement are discussed under Standard Three below.

Pacific College is free of pressure from external entities or organizations (CFR 1.5). It is owned by a group of five shareholders who share the mission and commitment to students espoused by the institution. Regional employers and community agencies are supportive and are invited to provide appropriate input.

The institution has been forthcoming in all of its communications with the Commission and with the team (CFR 1.8). During the 2015 site visit, all interviewees responded candidly to questions, amplifying what was contained in the report. For example, it was readily communicated that there have been two personnel changes in the ALO between January 2014 and the visit; and that work remains to be done to develop a functional culture of evidence. No inconsistencies were noted between the report and the interviews and documentation, and between interviewees.

### **Standard Two. Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions**

The site team finds that Pacific College is in substantial compliance with Standard Two. As their retention and graduation rates indicate, the VN and RN to BSN programs have adapted well to the needs of their clientele of working adults. Other evidence of effectiveness was found in reviews of syllabi, course materials, and online courses; inspection of curriculum vitae and faculty evaluations; and discussions with students, faculty, and representatives of hospitals and sites where students complete clinical work and are hired upon graduation.

#### Teaching and Learning.

The site team finds broad indicators of educational effectiveness: the VN program has a 81 percent on-time completion rate, the AS-VN program reports 100 percent, and the RN to BS program reached 88 percent completion in the first cohort . These are solid achievements in the context of completion rates of public-four year institutions overall, for online programs, and for underserved students in particular. The educational effectiveness of Pacific College grows out of a complex interaction between and among all of the parts: student services, academic support, faculty, administration, clinical staff, future employers, community volunteers, and students themselves. An alumna and employer who also holds a degree in another field, spoke glowingly

of the transformation she observed in her VN classmates throughout her enrollment: specifically, their growth in professionalism, demeanor, integrity and work ethic, in addition to the expected nursing competencies.

The institution has established and demonstrated appropriate linkages between programmatic, course, and professional standards (CFR 2.1). Using tables to show linkages, all nursing courses show how they incorporate QSEN competencies, evidence-based practice principles, Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommendations from the Future of Nursing report, and the WSCUC five core competencies all inter-relate with course objectives.

Active learning is promoted in many forms (CFR 2.5). In addition to clinical experiences, VN students are actively involved in pre and post assessments during their nursing courses. When students do not achieve sufficient scores in the post-assessments, remediation using the ATI commercial learning management system (LMS) is required per policy. In online courses, as affirmed by students in interviews and by team inspection of course websites, both VN and RN to BSN faculty foster a high level of interaction with students and among students; they require postings and responses to postings, require active participation in chat rooms, and provide students with both their emails and cell phone numbers. While College DL policy requires responses within a week, students report prompt feedback and grading turnaround, often within a few hours.

The institution's mission "to foster a continuous process of intellectual growth, character development, and academic integrity to achieve professional and personal success in the student's chosen profession" finds expression in many forms (CFR 2.2). During interviews, the team spoke with faculty, administration, and board members, and heard a consistent message about developing professionalism in their students. This is apparently making a difference in

the growth of the students, as interviews with clinical site personnel report that the appearance and demeanor of Pacific College students are more professional and more diligent in patient care responsibilities than students of other visiting schools. Additionally, the clinical site interviewed reported Pacific College has a good reputation in the community, that they produce quality nurses, therefore the clinical sites welcome the college's graduates. Pacific College has a contract with two institutions to provide educational programs to current employees and the institution then hires them back as nurses.

Since starting the RN to BS program, faculty report being more intentional about encouraging students to consider advancing the educational ladder. When team members interviewed students, many reported wanting to move on to graduate degrees. The institution may want to begin tracking the number of alumni who actually do continue their education and use these data as an additional student success indicator (CFR 2.3). Pacific College has already begun steps to start an alumni association, assigning the project to the Director of Student Services.

An indicator of student success is graduate placement following graduation. Of the first seven graduates of the RN to BSN program, all are gainfully employed in the profession. (CFR 2.7). The graduation placement for VN students is 40 percent, and discussions with faculty as well as students and community resource persons detail factors leading to the much lower placement figures. A major reason is that many students in the program are already employed as medical assistants at a large regional hospital and continue their current employment status until new VN positions open up there so that they can keep their employment benefits.

Faculty support student learning through collaborative work: there is a common course syllabus template for the RN to BSN nursing program. The program directors of the VN and

RN to BSN programs are now refining the syllabi so that they can be used effectively in both programs. Although the VN program is primarily face-to-face and hands-on, students are introduced to online learning through their English and math GE courses, and regular courses are supplemented with some online materials and interactions. Close cooperation between these units and the soon-to-be-established RN program will ensure that Pacific College's curriculum will provide students with a seamless transition from VN through the BSN.

### Student Learning Assessment

The assessment expectations of professional nursing accrediting agencies have focused the institution's attention on what WSCUC calls "indirect assessment" of student learning: program completion rates, on post-graduation employment, and on pass rates in the NCLEX. To meet WSCUC expectations, the RN to BSN program in particular will now need to adopt and to document the direct assessments of student performance throughout the curriculum (CFR 2.4, 2.6).

The institution has taken early steps in developing systematic and direct assessment of student learning outcomes for the RN to BSN program. The WSCUC's five core competencies are incorporated into program learning outcomes, along with those required by professional nursing agencies. The College switched to the Pearson online course management system at the beginning of the term in which the site visit took place, and faculty and the DL Director are already examining revisions that will bring the courses in line with institutional outcomes.

A review of writing assignments and grading practices in current online 300-level and 400-level Nursing courses indicates additional steps to bring the program into closer alignment with the Commission's expectations for the core competencies. Such development would include increasingly complex written and oral assignments as students move through the

program, and carefully constructed grading rubrics that provide clear and specific feedback to students, while also providing assessment data on component skills. The WSCUC [capstone](#) and [General Education](#) rubrics are versatile models that could be readily adapted to the College's needs.

**Recommendation:** That Pacific College develop appropriately challenging writing and research assignments and grading rubrics, so that it can be documented that RN to BSN students are, over the course of the program, acquiring senior-level competency in critical thinking, information literacy, and effective written communication (CFR 2.4, 2.6).

More broadly, the site team suggests that faculty leaders receive WSCUC-sponsored training in assessment; one such venue would be the occasional one-day intensive workshops Assessment 101 and 201. More discussion on the uses of assessment results for learning improvement is found under Standard Four below.

The College's first program review to be conducted using the WSCUC guidelines for program reviews was that of the VN program in 2014. The review was conducted under the College's recently formulated Program Review Policy and contains program ILOs, retention/graduation and employment data, as well as plans for improvement. The BN to RSN program review has begun, with the report due in December 2015. It is suggested that the College move towards including more direct assessment results in these reports: summaries of student performances measured against PLOs, demonstrating increasing competence in these areas over time, and culminating in mastery in the capstone and other senior-level courses (CFR 2.7, 2.4).

### Scholarship and Creativity

Pacific College has recently hired more faculty with doctorate degrees and experience in other baccalaureate-granting institutions. During interviews, the team discovered that there is emerging scholarship in the BS faculty as evidenced by attending conferences, belonging to numerous nursing organizations such as the honor society of nursing (Sigma Tau Theta International). Several faculty are working towards or have attained their advanced certification in academic nursing education (CFR 2.9). The College now offers to full-time faculty development grants of up to \$500 a year, and to “core” part-time faculty up to \$200 per year. A more sophisticated staff and the increasing regulatory environment will eventually require more substantial development funding.

**Recommendation:** That Pacific College continue to foster the scholarly and creative activities of baccalaureate faculty by providing institutional support for such efforts, by systematically tracking such accomplishments and recognizing them in faculty evaluation (CFR 2.8).

### Student Learning and Success.

On the basis of site interviews with students and Student Services staff, and review of the College website, handbooks, and print materials, the team finds that students are provided with accurate program information prior to and during matriculation and have access to both scheduled and as-needed advising from both faculty and student services professionals (CFR 2.12, 2.13). Transfer course evaluation is the purview of the Registrar, with a transfer table and standard protocol (CFR 2.14). The Vice President for Instruction and the Director of Student Services periodically visit the satellite campuses to solicit input from students, and these officers as well as offices of the Registrar, Career Services, Financial Aid, and Enrollment Management

maintain an open-door policy for students at the main campus. Students report that complaints--academic, technological, logistic--are listened to with respect and addressed promptly. The College librarian meets with students at the beginning of each semester to train them in accessing research materials on EBSCO and also maintains collections of hard-copy course and research resources on all three campuses (CFR 2.13).

### **Standard Three. Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability**

The site team finds that Pacific College is in substantial compliance with Standard Three. The College employs a sufficient number of faculty who are well-qualified and experienced in the profession as well as in teaching. Financially, the institution has a long history of stability and currently operates under a policy of using only currently available funding. As the College expands, the site team recommends movement towards a more inclusive budget process and Accounts Payable system. Information technology and resources are continuously improved; most recently, fiber optic systems were installed on all three sites. The organizational structure has been expanded with the addition of several key positions, filled with highly experienced and well-qualified persons. The Board of Directors now reviews and approves the budget and has formed three new committees. Directors affirm their desire to exercise more fiduciary oversight and to continue to actively support the academic evolution of the College.

#### **Faculty and Staff**

The College employs an adequate number of qualified nursing instructors who are current with professional content and standards, as indicated by the curriculum vitae reviewed by the team. The majority of faculty in the RN to BS program have doctoral degrees, while the remainder have MS degrees. The VN faculty have a variety of educational levels, MS, BS, or

VN degrees, and faculty qualifications meet the standards set by the California Board of Nursing (CFR 3.1). Support staff are experienced and well qualified. The directors of the various support units include three with MBA's and one with a Master of Education, as well as substantial experience in post-secondary education administration (CFR 3.1).

The policies in the faculty and professional handbooks are clear, well developed, and consistent with the mission and values of the College; and training in pedagogy, College policies, and federal regulations are offered. Faculty and professional staff are evaluated regularly for teaching effectiveness and service, with ratings recorded on the appropriate evaluation forms (CFR 3.2, 3.3).

The team noted that the sick time policy of the institution is not in compliance with recent state of California legislation requiring sick pay benefits for certain part-time employees, and the Administration was advised that the policy should be revisited. While tenure is not a WSCUC expectation, some form of rank might be considered, as well as annual contracts, or even rolling contracts for the most highly ranked faculty; this would enhance retention for both faculty and for the College.

#### Fiscal Resources

The College has a history of financial stability (CFR 3.4). Audited financial statements provided by the institution reveal net income in 2014 and 2013 of \$337,371 and \$182,880 respectively. The independent auditor's reports on the financial statements for those periods show unqualified opinions, and the firm that conducted the audits has a clear license in the state, as does the lead partner on the account. The institution has adequate financial reserves, with a cash balance sufficient to cover over a full year of operating expenses.

When common higher education ratio analysis is applied, the institution's financial statements fare well, as indicated in the table below.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Primary Reserve</b>	83%	68%	75%	77%	84%
<i>Recommended Minimum</i>					40%
<b>Equity</b>	54%	42%	49%	55%	54%
<i>Recommended Minimum</i>					50%
<b>Net Income</b>	39%	16%	17%	5%	9%
<i>Recommended Minimum</i>					3%
<b>ED Composite Score</b>	3.0	2.8	3.0	3.0	3.0
<i>Maximum</i>					3.0
<i>Minimum</i>					1.5
<b>Composite Financial Index</b>	7.9	7.3	7.6	4.8	6.3
<i>Recommended Minimum</i>					3.0

The institution has good tracking of current and prospective enrollment, and tracks revenue and cash flow from class tuition separately, which is an effective practice (CFR 3.4). The College has made progress in its resource tracking, planning, and budgeting processes – expense requests are required to include information about how the request impacts the College’s strategic plan, for example.

Further development, however, will be essential as the institution grows. The CFO will play an increasingly important role in managing the increasingly complex fiscal activities of the institution, and a high level of skill will be required. The College is encouraged to strengthen the role of the CFO, perhaps by participation in NACUBO or regional development activities. This is also an appropriate time to decentralize the budgeting process and more fully integrate it with operations, in particular with the rest of the institution’s strategic planning.

As budgeting processes are improved, the College will need to report costs by department so that individuals managing the various areas of the College are able to track costs actually incurred, and compare those costs with the budget. It would be appropriate at this time to strengthen the Accounts Payable system (ideally electronic and tied to the budgeting and financial system), by adding department manager approval for expenditures charged to his/her

department and appropriate internal controls. Now that the new Controller has been in place for some time, it would also be a good time to eliminate the redundant accounts payable tracking that has been in place as a backup system.

Financial reporting at the College has been improved. Monthly financial statements are prepared by the College's controller, and reviewed by the President/CEO and the Vice President/CFO. The Finance Committee of the Board also receives the monthly statements, and has opportunity to ask questions of the leadership at its meetings.

### Physical and Information Resources

The College offers courses at three sites. The site team's off-site visit in January 2014 documented that satellites are of adequate size, well-maintained, and properly equipped with course materials, computers and online access (CFR 3.5). The College's information technology resources have continued to improve and are sufficient to support its academic and administrative functions (CFR 3.5). The College employs a part time IT manager, as well as a full-time support person. The resource centers provided at the three sites provide students with computers for access to academic materials or do research. On the College website, the faculty portal will provide for easier collection and analysis of data, such as test results, course outlines, and attendance records; while the student portal is providing students easier access to learning and support materials.

The College has recently deployed the emergency notification features of its SONISWEB system. The system allows the College to contact students and employees in the event of an emergency. This allows the College to comply with Federal law that mandates that institutions that receive Title IV funding have in place emergency contact systems of this type.

## Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes

Consistent with the values of the College, the leadership team is ethical, hard-working and high-performing and expects others, including students, to be as well (CFR 3.6). The President is knowledgeable in finance, the current CFO is most knowledgeable in academic administration, and the VP of Instruction is perhaps most knowledgeable in operations. Decision making is highly centralized at the level of the President, Vice President/CFO, Vice President of Instruction, and Director of Institutional Improvement and Planning.

As the College grows in enrollment and develops new programs, particularly at the upper division and higher degree levels, it will need to involve faculty and department managers in data-driven decision-making processes (CFR 3.10). The committee structure of the College is not yet fully developed. The academic departments are small and tend to operate as committees of the whole. Faculty governance includes participation in regular faculty meetings, curriculum committees for the VN and RN to BSN programs and participation in such College-wide committees as the Strategic Planning Committee and the Accreditation Steering Committee. For now, that is appropriate. As more full-time faculty are hired, it will be reasonable to expect that a campus-wide faculty organization will be established, with oversight of academic policy and faculty development.

Pacific College is owned by five shareholders, three of whom are the President, the Vice President/CFO and the Bookkeeper, who is also the wife of the President. In the for-profit arena, particularly a closely-held institution such as Pacific College, it can be difficult for a governing board to assume its full responsibility. That said, a Board of Directors has a clear fiduciary responsibility as well as legal and financial risk, and Pacific College's Board will need to assume these more vigorously (CFR 3.9).

The Board is comprised of six regular members and the President as a non-voting, ex-officio member. The members of the Board are highly qualified in diverse fields. After appropriate consideration, the Board recently appointed an additional member and two additional members have agreed to join the Board in 2016 when current professional conflicts have been resolved. These two members are also highly qualified. The Board, like the College, is evolving. Three Board committees have recently been appointed and will need to schedule regular meetings. It is clear that members of the finance committee receive monthly reports and that the board did approve the annual budget. The audit committee has not yet met, but the chair of the committee has pledged to meet and is committed to fulfilling the role of the committee. The Board should consider assigning the audit committee to assess risk for the College and also the directors' and officers' (D & O) coverage.

While it was clear from Board meetings that the Board meets regularly and is apprised of activities at the College, it was not clear what type of materials are given to the Board in advance of meetings nor what type of discussion usually occurs at Board meetings. The Board is encouraged to keep more detailed minutes, perhaps adhering to an established template.

The site team recognizes that while several Board members have higher education experience, they may not have experience on the boards of such institutions. There might be an advantage to engaging a board consultant to work with the Board and senior management.

The President has shared his succession plan with the Board in broad terms. Given the ownership structure of the College and in order to assure the sustainability of the College to fulfill its fiduciary duty, the Board must also more fully understand the implications of his estate plan for the College.

**Recommendation:** That the Board of Directors be kept fully informed about the shareholder structure and the president's estate plan, including their implications for the future (CFR 3.9).

#### **Standard Four. Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement**

The site team finds that Pacific College has a profound and widespread commitment to the ensuring their students' academic and professional success. This translates into the recent restructuring of administration, the hiring of highly qualified professionals as leaders, administrators, and student services staff; communal rewriting of mission, vision, values, and student learning outcomes at all levels; student-centered policies, scheduling, and tuition; and day-to-day attentiveness to the needs of individual students.

It is presently in the earlier stages of gathering and analyzing data on student attributes and student performances, data that can be used to document student needs and mastery of core competencies, and that are therefore the foundation for effective assessment and planning. The members of the campus community need to learn to integrate the SonisWeb student information system and other data sources into quality assurance processes, and to ensure that the institution continues to improve. The progress that has already been made in these areas and the plans to further operationalize CFRs 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 have convinced the site team that the institution has moved beyond minimal compliance and has reached compliance with Standard Four.

#### Quality Assurance Processes

Pacific College is exemplary in their interactions with students, responding to student requests and needs rapidly (CFR4.1). For example, students asked for tutors and the institution hired tutors to ensure student success. Upon recommendation from the last visit, the institution

revised their surveys to include a 6 point likert scale in order to obtain climate survey information with higher validity and reliability. Courses, faculty, clinical sites, and climate surveys of student services are conducted for quality improvement of the institution.

The institution is mindful of graduation counts from year to year and can produce them on request. However, tables could be labeled more clearly, indicating for example whether percentages or counts are displayed; and data are displayed in single-year format rather than in historical form so that trends are apparent. Like the paucity of data in the institutional report, such data displays are evidence that the institution has not yet become a “culture of evidence.” Since WSCUC has several CFRs related to collecting, analyzing, displaying, and acting on data, the team recommends specific action in this area (i.e., CFR 1.2, 1.6, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10, 2.12, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)

**Recommendation:** That the institution develop a larger and more systematic approach to measuring, analyzing aggregated and disaggregated data (i.e., by ethnicity, by gender, and by ethnicity and gender), and responding to patterns that develop that demonstrate hindrance to student success. The institution is encouraged to determine other program-specific indicators germane to this institution that provide additional information to stakeholders (CFR 4.1, 4.2).

**Recommendation:** That certain data be displayed publicly using four-year trended data on each indicator so interested stakeholders can make decisions accordingly. This is consistent with federal, regional and/or state requirements. Typical indicators used by the federal government include on-time graduation rate, retention rate, time-to-degree, and job placement (CFR 4.1, 4.2)

## Institutional Learning and Improvement

Pacific College's Strategic Planning Committee produced an Institutional Assessment and Improvement Plan in 2014 that grows out of the institution's mission, values, and mission. The committee included all College's executives, board members, and many staff members, as well as four external stakeholders and two students. On the basis of their appraisal of areas for improvement, the committee developed lists of objectives and target dates for such areas as administration, budgeting, program curricula, student services, learning resources, and facilities. The 2014 IAIP was reviewed by the management team in December 2014 and will be reviewed and updated each December thereafter, with a summary of progress to be shared with the Board of Directors and campus constituencies (CFR 4.5, 4.6).

The institution is acutely aware of the changing higher education environment, both in its own geographical region and beyond (CFR 4.7). To accommodate students' work schedules, 85 percent of classes of on-the-ground courses are now weekend or evening scheduled while the remainder are during the weekday; and the RN to BSN program has been offered online since its inception (CFR 2.10). In all site interviews, participants discussed such environmental factors as competing and cooperating schools in the area; federal, state, and nursing board regulations; demand from students and employers for higher-level degrees in nursing; and the increasing importance of technological skills in the profession (CFR 4.7). The newly approved RN program is intended to help VN students move upward on the career ladder.

A smaller-scale indication of context-sensitivity (and sensitivity to student needs), and of the institution's integrity is that Pacific College has acquired American Council of Education approval of its General Education courses so that students can, as needed, transfer these courses to other institutions that might better enable them to meet their aspirations (CFR 2.10). A large-

scale adaptation involves the BS in Health Care Administration, approved but currently dormant. It is being revamped into a program to prepare employees who wish to move into management from lower tier (LVN, MA) positions without becoming an RN. The advent of more federal and insurance oversight has created many new management positions that do not require extensive nursing experience. Pacific College is poised to respond to these changes (CFR 4.7).

### **SECTION III. FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Findings**

The site team finds that Pacific College is in substantial compliance with the Four Standards. This appraisal is based on the review of numerous documents developed over time by the institution and on interviews with all members of the management team, professional support staff, faculty, students, and representatives of external constituencies. We encourage specific additional changes in practice that the institution might find helpful, and we recommend other changes that the institution should undertake promptly.

#### **Commendations**

The site team commends faculty, staff, administration and governing board for creating and sustaining a learning environment for students in which their lives are truly transformed. The large community of employers and volunteers with which the team met, was unanimous in their enthusiastic endorsement of the professionalism, competence, integrity and work ethic of the graduates of Pacific College.

Pacific College is commended for linking the student learning outcomes of the several professional nursing organizations to the five core competencies of WASC; has demonstrated how the VN and RN-BSN curricula promote these outcomes; and displays these interconnections in a format that is easily accessible to all—to students and to campus and community.

The team commends Pacific College administration, faculty, and staff for their timely and responsive interactions resulting in consistent, personalized, yet systematic advisement with students before matriculation, during student tenure, and after completion of the program. These interactions ensure student success.

Turnover, oft a source of concern, has been a boon to Pacific College. The new members of this team have brought experience, strength, enthusiasm and reinvigorated others' commitment to the College. The administration is commended for their wisdom in bringing these new members to the College and for heeding their sound advice consistently and promptly.

Considering the diversity of Pacific College students, the graduation and licensure pass rates are high, in particular for the long-established VN programs. The RN to BSN program is still early in its third year and has an 88% graduation rate for its first cohort. These successes do not happen by accident but by intent. The faculty and staff who work with the students are to be commended as are the administrators who support their ongoing efforts and initiatives.

## **Recommendations**

### Standard 2

- 2.1. That Pacific College develop appropriately challenging writing and research assignments and grading rubrics, so that it can be documented that RN to BSN students are gradually acquiring senior-level competency in critical thinking, information literacy, and effective written communication (CFR 2.4, 2.6).
- 2.2. That Pacific College continue to foster the scholarly and creative activities of baccalaureate faculty by providing institutional support for such efforts, by systematically tracking such accomplishments and recognizing them in faculty evaluation (CFR 2.8).

### Standard 3

- 3.1. That the Board of Directors be kept fully informed about the shareholder structure and the president's estate plan including their implications for the future (CFR 3.9).

#### Standard 4

4.1. That the institution develop a larger and more systematic approach to measuring, analyzing aggregated and disaggregated data (i.e., by ethnicity, by gender, and by ethnicity and gender), and responding to patterns that develop that demonstrate hindrance to student success. The institution is encouraged to determine other program-specific indicators germane to this institution that provide additional information to stakeholders (CFR 4.1, 4.2).

4.2. That certain data be displayed publicly using four-year trended data on each indicator so interested stakeholders can make decisions accordingly. This is consistent with federal, regional and/or state requirements. Typical indicators used by the federal government include on-time graduation rate, retention rate, time-to-degree, and job placement (CFR 4.1, 4.2).

**Appendix 1 - Update: Pacific College CREDIT HOUR AND PROGRAM LENGTH REVIEW FORM**

**Responses are provided only for the first two items; the remaining items in this category were found satisfactory in the first SAV.**

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate. )
Policy on credit hour	Is this policy easily accessible? YES
	If so, where is the policy located? It is located in the college catalog, page __; in the faculty handbook, page __; and in the Distance Education Handbook, page __, where there is an explicit statement regarding online equivalencies.
	Comments:
Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour	Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)? YES. Both the VN and RN to BSN program adopt commercially produced nursing courses from leading publishers and adapt these to six- and eight-week terms, ensuring that these observe federal credit hour and program length requirements. Adherence to these requirements is monitored by faculty curriculum committees and, beginning with his recent hiring, the Director of General Education and Distance and Blended Education.
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? YES
	Comments:

Review Completed By: Vice chair of SAV2 site team  
Date: 10/14-15/15

**Appendix 2 – Transfer Credit Policy Review**

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate. )
Transfer Credit Policy(s)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? YES.
	If so, is the policy publically available? YES. If so, where?  It is available in abbreviated form in the college catalog.
	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?  YES.
	Comments:  Review of transcripts is primarily the responsibility of the Registrar; program directors review transfer courses to be applied towards program requirements; a list of courses from various institutions that have already been approved for transfer is available on SonisWeb.

Review Completed By: Vice chair of SAV2 site team  
Date: 10/14-15/15