

**REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM  
SPECIAL VISIT**

To Zaytuna College

February 5-7, 2018

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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, Accreditation History, and Visit**

Zaytuna College is the first Muslim liberal arts college in the United States and is located in Berkeley, California. It began as an institute that focused on educational programs, publications, and productions to advance Islam's educational and intellectual legacy and to provide learning among Western Muslims. The institution currently offers one bachelor's degree in Islamic Law and Theology and is in the process of seeking WSCUC approval to offer its first graduate degree, a Master of Arts degree.

In 2014, Zaytuna College graduated 9 students in their one degree offering in Islamic Law and Theology. As of November 2017, Zaytuna College has an enrollment of 60 undergraduates and nearly 40 alumni.

Currently, the institution does not operate off-campus locations or distance education programs. It has two locations in within Berkeley, one housing its administrative offices and some instruction and public events, and its newly acquired campus in the Berkeley Hills area, a few miles from the administrative offices.

In the fall of 2010, Zaytuna notified WSCUC of its intent to become accredited. In December 2013 the institution sought eligibility to apply for accreditation and had their first Seeking Accreditation Visit (SAV) in October of 2014. The Commission granted Zaytuna initial accreditation on March 4, 2015, followed by a required Mid-Cycle Report in spring of 2017, and a Special Visit in the spring of 2018. The current report is based on the Special Visit to Zaytuna College that was held on February 6-7, 2018, focusing on the three areas identified by the SAV team and the Commission:

1. Board development through engagement with organizations that will aid the continuing embrace of best governance practices in higher education [CFRs 3.6, 3.7, 3.9]
2. Institutional research with emphasis on building internal capacities to obtain, analyze and use key performance data [CFRs 4.1, 4.2]
3. Policy development, particularly with regard to faculty roles and human resources [CFRs 3.2]

## **B. Description of the Team's Review Process**

The team received Zaytuna College's self-study report in early December of 2017 and reviewed the prior WSCUC action letter. Each team member submitted initial responses to each section of the institution's self-study report, focusing on the three areas identified by the SAV team. The team's assistant chair compiled all initial responses on the team worksheet in preparation for the team's two-hour conference call on January 10, 2018. During the call, the team discussed areas of focus for the special visit, compiled a list of additional documents from the institution, schedule of the visit, and agreed to a division of effort in preparing the site visit report. Each member served as first author for one section of the report and second author for other sections. The site visit began on February 5, 2018 at 4pm with a team orientation meeting reviewing the visit schedule, team members' individual meeting schedules, and areas of focus for each meeting. The Special Visit took place all day on February 6 and concluded the next day with the exit meeting. While most of the meetings throughout the visit were conducted in person with institutional representatives, meetings with the institution's president were conducted via Skype, as he was on travel.

### **C. Quality of Report**

Zaytuna College's Special Visit report summarized its history and actions taken since the 2014 Seeking Accreditation Visit (SAV) and the 2015 WSCUC Commission Action Letter (CAL). The main sections of the report were well organized into the three areas cited in the Commission's recommendations: board governance, institutional research, and faculty and human resource policies. The report was deliberate in its aim to address each component of the three recommendations while not straying from the focus of the Special Visit.

The team felt that the report was inconsistent in providing supporting evidence to substantiate ways in which the Commission's recommendations were addressed on an institutional level or took an approach nested in narrow examples. For example, the Commission's first recommendation for the institution had been for the institution's governing board to begin transitioning from an operating body to a governing body. [CFRs 3.6, 3.7, 3.9] However, the report did not include the Board's bylaws to demonstrate how the institution had improved its accountability structure and chain of command between the governing board and the college administrative and academic leadership. Key documents, such as the Board's meeting minutes, were not initially presented to evidence of how the Board had changed its role from operations to governance.

The Commission also recommended an enhancement of IR capacity to support the institution's core quality-assurance-processes. [CFR 4.1] The report, however, had gaps in describing updated institutional quality-assurance processes to evidence how the institution has incorporated IR capacity across institutional decision-making.

The Commission's third recommendation on policy development also had gaps in evidence in the report. [CFR 3.2] The institution's report, however, did not provide a faculty governance manual or a faculty handbook to support its discussions around this third recommendation on faculty and HR policies. Although some of the supporting documents described structures, systems, and processes for faculty hiring, evaluation, promotion, oversight of academic programs and governance, the report did not indicate whether these attachments were excerpted from a more comprehensive document. Faculty policy discussions reported in the report and attachments frequently came across as incidental and fragmented, and hampered the team's initial review.

The team also found that the report insufficiently elaborated or omitted information that was important in understanding the institution's context related to the three focal issues of this visit. For example, the team learned briefly from the report that institution encountered administrative turmoil, without providing additional details of what instigated this period of time or how this period in the institution's history was resolved (Institutional Report, p. 19). Only after the team requested additional documents of board minutes did the team learn more about the turmoil.

The team appreciated Zaytuna's prompt response for additional documents that the team requested upon reading and review of the report. However, the relatively large number illustrates the overly narrow scope of the original self-study submission and in some cases, lack of sufficient evidence toward progress made on the Commission's recommendations for this Special Visit. In addition, the Special Visit report did not discuss or identify areas still needing improvement and proposed action items for ongoing or future development. Although the Special Visit report represented a missed

opportunity to demonstrate the progress the institution has made since their SAV, the team notes the Special Visit with the institution's community and leadership significantly improved the team's review and evaluation of the institution.

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

### **A. Issue 1: Board Development**

The previous SAV team report and Commission letter noted the need to further develop and expand the board, encouraging transition away from its seemingly excessive involvement in academic affairs and the day-to-day managerial detail of the institution. As identified in the 2014 SAV team report, the institution understood needing to transition for the board to transition from an "initial founding or start-up phase" to an institutionalized mode with the "requisite structures, metrics, roles, policies and procedures that will insure stability, accountability and quality over the long haul, regardless of the presence or eventual replacement of its charismatic co-founders." The SAV team report noted the "multiple hats" worn by faculty, staff, trustees, and founders, and recommended the board continue to transition away from operational issues, as may have been called for in Zaytuna's early years as an institute, to focus on the key strategic challenges facing the institution's sustainability and growth, institutionalization and continuity of leadership, and infrastructure development commensurate with planned growth.

#### *Operational Board to Governing Board*

The team found evidence that this refocusing of the board has begun. It recommends, however, that the board continue its development in moving into a governing board. Through meetings with board members during the visit, it became

evident that several members of the board were actively involved in fundraising and intentional expansion of the institution. The institution's impressive and successful annual campaigns, and opportunistic responses to expand, has resulted in its acquisition of 10.4 acres of highly desirable Berkeley Hills real estate that was the prior location of a Lutheran seminary. The team found this recent initiative to have positive opportunities for institutional capacity and advancement in educational offerings to fulfill its institutional mission.

The team requested and reviewed the resumes of board members. It recognized that the institution had made positive additions with its new members. In interviews with three new board members during the visit, along with board members who have had longer tenures, the team found that the board's role had been transitioning away from daily operations and toward a more strategic focus, including fundraising and an incipient understanding of its unique role in hiring, firing, and overseeing the institution's president. [CFR 3.6] The team also found the newest board members' qualifications in higher education experience and leadership, as well in finance, as ways in which the institution was strengthening its leadership to ensure institutional capacity with a focus on educational effectiveness. [CFRs 3.6, 3.7]

The team also found areas in which the board still struggled with moving away from an operational board. The SAV team report and Commission Action Letter recommended the institution focus on board development to embrace best practices in governance in higher education. The Special Visit team did find evidence of the board's having engaged in systematic development activities. Although documents provided indicated that some board members attended one or more board-related trainings, but

the majority had not done so. The trainings that had been done, as evidenced through additional documents shared by the institution, appeared to lack focus on the roles appropriate for a higher education governing board.

Other areas were also of concern. Membership information on board committees, including committee minutes, were not provided. Therefore, the expertise on these committees and their specific activity and effectiveness could not be evaluated. In meetings with board members during the visit, the team sought more generally to understand how the board went about evaluating its own effectiveness and whether key performance indicators (KPIs) for performance had been set and discussed. The team learned that an annual formal evaluation of the board's effectiveness did not currently exist, and therefore, the institution's progress toward attaining its strategic goals, how strategic goals and key performance indicators, and the board's roles in setting and measuring those goals was unclear to the team. The team views this practice as integral to the institution as it embarks on new academic initiatives, such as the proposal to add a new Master's degree. The team recommends the board attend to strategic planning, establishing institutional goals, key performance metrics, and assessment of board effectiveness, making this a priority as the institution is positioning itself to expand and grow. [CFRs 3.6, 3.7]

Another area that demonstrated to the team that the board was in its early stages of understanding of best governance practices in higher education was through the board minutes, which were referred to as board "notes". The team found the board notes, which had to be requested, were inadequate, including basic information such as the place and duration of meetings, major points of discussion on each agenda item,

and actions items stemming from board discussion. The notes reported that decisions were made unanimously, without clarification of identification of potential conflict of roles, and without indicating whether those impacted by the decision had recused themselves from voting. The team strongly recommends that the board improve its minutes and clarify potential role conflicts, and how they were handled, in the meetings and in the minutes of the meetings.

Elaborating on the role of conflict concerns, the SAV team report had recommended that the institution address issues surrounding the overlapping roles held by a few key individuals. This had been recommended as part of the institution's transitioning from its foundational stage to that of a more stabilized institution with checks and balances across leadership. The Special Visit team discovered that the three founders of the institution, who continued to sit on the board and to hold voting rights, were still serving simultaneously in board, administrative, and faculty capacities. These multiple roles held across a few individuals continues to blur lines of accountability, demonstrating some of the challenges that institution still faces in its efforts to move from a start-up model toward an institution with a healthy system of checks and balances that includes diverse perspectives and voices in board decision making.

### *Evaluation of the CEO*

The team also found the board to be in a developmental stage in its role in goal setting and evaluating the performance of the president. The team learned through the visit and the requested board minutes that the board had set up committees to evaluate the performance of the president, but, curiously, also the performance of other senior

leaders. While the team found no documentation of board discussions surrounding the evaluation of the president, there was a single reference, according to board meeting minutes on May 20, 2017, to an evaluation of the president by a two person committee, one of whom was the president himself. The team finds the institution still needs to establish governance processes within the board around strategic goals, key performance indicators, and performance evaluation of the president. [CFR 3.9]

### *Conclusion*

The team found both seasoned and new board members of Zaytuna College to be deeply committed to the mission and acknowledges the considerable success in fundraising and gathering strong national support for the institution. In continuing to transition from an operational board to a governing board, the team recommends the institution commit to educating themselves in the best practices in higher education, clarifying roles on the board that create potential conflict of interest, solidify and operationalize methods to assess board effectiveness through setting key performance indicators, and systematizing and actualize practices to evaluate institutional leadership.

### **B. Issue 2 Institutional Research**

The March 2015 WSCUC Commission Action Letter pointed to “institutional research, with emphasis on building internal capacities to obtain, analyze, and use key performance data” as an area of improvement for the institution, and formally recommended that “the administration take steps to develop an institutional research capacity capable of designing systems for the collection, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of data to inform evidence-based decision-making and planning.” [CFRs 4.1, 4.2]

The institution began gathering several types of institutional data since its first year of operation in 2010, including the following as evidence for learning outcome assessments: student records, results from student surveys regarding classroom and campus experiences, and students' senior theses. The institution acknowledged that institutional research (IR) capacity was in the nascent stages of development at the time of its initial accreditation. The SAV Team suggested in its report that Zaytuna "follow through on its commitment to hire a new staff member in institutional research or support a current staff member" to "to refine and enhance its quality-assurance processes." (SAV Report, p. 29) The College chose the latter and began to bolster its internal IR capacity through reorganization, reassigning an existing staff member, and supporting the reassigned staff member's professional development in the area of IR.

Zaytuna renamed the Office of Assessment and Accreditation to the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) with the intention to 1) emphasize that the responsibilities for accreditation and compliance are distributed throughout the institution and not concentrated in one office; and 2) to place a higher importance on the collection, analysis, and use of institutional data for planning and decision-making. Further, the institution's Special Visit report also pointed to the institution's intent in aligning its data strategy and IR functions with its mission of Islamic higher learning. The institution adopted, as a statement to instill a culture of evidence, an Islamic teaching: "Knowledge without action is vanity, and action without knowledge is insanity." In addition, the OIR supplemented its office description with a traditional Islamic framework of learning to help explain its purposes and alignment with the College's outlook

Corresponding to the reorganization of the OIR, the accreditation liaison officer (ALO), who oversaw the Office of Assessment and Accreditation, was appointed to also hold the role of director of institutional research. The institution demonstrated their support of the director's professional development in the area of IR through investing in the director's completion of an online graduate certificate program offered by Penn State University. As a result, the director has shared her knowledge with other members of the institution by sharing training materials and hosting internal workshops on IR.

Under the leadership of the director, the Office of Institutional Research has developed in these areas:

- A system to collect and compile institutional data from different departments, including channels for the OIR and department staff to come up with new instruments for data collection.
- A system to integrate various datasets to construct meaningful data structures and to facilitate complex, cross-department data analyses.
- A collection of information resources for faculty and staff to become familiar with the institution's IR functions and their related roles. These resources include annual IR workshops; a resource guide on protocols related to the execution of IR activities, such as survey administration and data integrity and confidentiality; and sample analyses and reports for various offices to demonstrate possibilities and encourage their use of IR reports for planning and decision-making.
- A set of protocols on dissemination of data internally and externally.
- A system through which faculty and administrators may request IR projects, including a way to capture the reflections and interpretations of data by

individuals who request an IR project, thereby formally closing the loop on each project; and a way to systematically review, prioritize, and scope research and data requests.

The Office of Institutional Research has established a clear system to disseminate institutional data and information internally while paying attention to considerations such as confidentiality. The office maintains and informs the faculty and staff of the inventory of different types of data it maintains, provides annual report and fact sheets, and has a system by which faculty and staff can request data and analyses. [CFRs 4.1, 4.2]

The institution has made significant progress in terms of its IR capacity. The allocation of resources to professionalize the IR personnel and the design and implementation of its systems have established a solid foundation for the continuing development and growth of IR functions. The team found examples of how IR has supported departments in decision-making and planning through data, and analyses to help “close-the-loop”. In particular, the team found the impact of OIR’s capacity to aid decision-making and planning through their Ramadan fundraising campaign. The OIR collected data from multiple departments (i.e., marketing and development), teased out connections and insight through cross-analyses of different data subsets, and initiated contacts to these departments to improve the campaign’s effectiveness. As a result, these departments have incorporated IR functions in their decision mechanism and the OIR participates regularly in the departments operation discussions. [CFR 4.2]

With the exception of the Ramadan campaign, other examples and explanations of the role of OIR mentioned in their SVR and in Special Visit interviews seemed

incidental and sometimes as an afterthought. The team discovered that significant changes were made to academic programs related to faculty workload without using the IR functions, data, and analysis, even though the director of IR reports to the Dean of faculty. The team found that IR functions are not systematically incorporated in the core processes of the institution and suggests the institution examine their current structure of where OIR should report in the organizational structure to ensure that the reach of IR is systematic, rather than haphazard.

During the Special Visit, the team found that the OIR (staffed only by the IR director) is generally competent and capable of responding to the institution's current IR demands and explores different forms of expanding skills in enhancing the OIR's capacity to mine and analyze data. However, the team also found throughout interviews that greater development in research methods will benefit those in OIR to better serve the institution. The team affirms the IR director's recognition of needing further development in capacity, technical capability, and bandwidth in order to meet the growing IR demands, instead of trying to catch up to them.

The team recognized the institution's marked improvement in internal dissemination of data and results of IR analyses through establishing a system and protocols and the OIR's proactive approach and communications. However, the institution is lagging behind in the external dissemination of appropriate data and information. For example, the institution's website provides insufficient student success and achievement data. The institution's report acknowledged that it has not yet begun to disseminate externally student success data, except for graduation rate and retention rates. Zaytuna lists two reasons in their report for this lag in external data dissemination.

First, the institution has not chosen a technological tool for generating report on assessment results. Second, the institution has decided to wait until graduating four or five cohorts before formally publishing student achievement data.

The team learned during the on-site interview that the institution has not shared data and results of analyses externally when it is appropriate, including not having published student success data on its website. While, the team understands the institution's wish to represent student success with rich data consistent with their unique context and not merely graduation and retention data, the pursuit of a more nuanced representation does not need to stall the sharing of more basic information. The team suggests that Zaytuna takes a more iterative approach and begin to publish student success and other appropriate institutional data in their basic form immediately, and iteratively upgrade its presentations as the institution finds solutions to more richly and in more nuanced ways represent these data and information.

Zaytuna has taken an initial approach of tracking and comparing data and results of analyses over time in developing its internal benchmarks. While continuous accumulation and analysis of key metrics has enabled the institution to compare data year-to-year, it has only begun to draw insights from these comparative analyses to identify ideal thresholds and key performance indicators for institutional goal-setting. Similarly, the institution appears to be in the beginning stages of developing a system to identify peer institutions for the purpose of external benchmarking. Although benchmarking is inherently complex for a college with an unique mission and context and therefore challenging to identify comparable peer institutions, the team suggests that Zaytuna continue to hone its benchmarking capability through further developing

and refining its internal benchmarking methods and explore professional development or external consulting in this area to support the institution in core quality-assurance, decision-making, and planning processes. [CFRs 4.1 and 4.2]

### *Conclusion*

Overall, the team commends Zaytuna for devoting resources to enhance internal IR capacity through professional development of an existing personnel. Based on the Special Visit report and on-campus interviews, the OIR exhibited sufficient competency to handle current institutional data demands, given its current small size. However, as the institution expands and operations becomes more systemized and complex, the team suggests that the institution's leadership, alongside OIR, regularly evaluate the internal IR capacity to ensure that it is sufficient both in terms of technical expertise and number of staff.

The team also acknowledges the proactive approach taken by the OIR in reaching out and educating departments on the significance and benefits of IR functions to ensure data-driven decision making. To continue Zaytuna's development in the area of developing a culture of evidence, the team recommends the institution create practices that incorporate IR functions into its core quality assurance processes.

Lastly, the team's efforts to ascertain whether IR functions is formally integrated into its core processes such as outcome assessment, curricular change, and program review were hampered by the fact that the institution did not provide written documents of these processes. Consequently, the team found that the institution has not demonstrated how IR functions in the institution's core decision-making, planning, and quality assurance processes. Without such formal integration, establishment of a culture of evidence will be challenging.

### **C. Issue 3: Policies**

The 2014 SAV report and Commission Action Letter identified faculty and personnel policies as needing further development. The team reviewed policies related to both Human Resources and faculty, along with additional requested documents, and gathered further information during the special visit.

#### *Human Resources Policies*

The SAV team and Commission recommended the institution to consider engaging a human resources (HR) consultant to review its policies, procedures, and practices to ensure they are consistent with statutory regulations and best practices across higher education. [CFR 3.2] At the time of the SAV, Zaytuna outsourced all of its HR functions to an outside consulting group. Subsequently, the institution hired an HR professional to staff a one-person HR office while continuing to use the outside consulting group for “transactional processing” of its payroll and other functions. The Special Visit team learned during the visit that the institution used the outside HR group to formally employ the institution’s faculty and staff which enables them to obtain health insurance and other benefits at substantially reduced rates.

In its efforts to review policies the team requested, and was provided, the current Faculty Handbook as part of its review. The team learned during the Special Visit that the current Employee Handbook was created with the extensive involvement of an outside law firm specializing in employment law. This document included many policies related to HR, such as terms of employment (at will), legal issues with respect to California and federal law, thus helping to fulfill the last team’s recommendations

regarding use of outside consultants “to ensure th[at] they are consistent with statutory regulations and best practices across higher education.”

The team did find statements in the Employee Handbook that were unclear, such as all employees being “at will”, when, in fact, faculty are generally contractual according to the Faculty Handbook (Attachment 25). The team suggests that if the Faculty Handbook is intended to apply to all employees, including faculty and contractual employees, it should be made clearer how “at will” applies to faculty and other contractual employees. [CFR 3.2]

The team requested and was provided a copy of the institution’s grievance policy, but found that what was provided the was a very general statement around resolving differences without needing to file grievances. During the Special Visit, however, the team was also provided an “Employee Handbook Addendum” dated January 25, 2018 less than two weeks before the visit that addressed “Grievance/Open Door Policy and Procedure.” This version of the grievance policy was more detailed than the one initially sent to the team, but needed further work particularly as it recommended that employees bring their grievance matters first to the attention of the immediate manager or supervisor. The team found the institution still needed further development of this policy, particularly in instances where the employee has a grievances with their supervisor.

### *Faculty Policies*

The team also requested a copy of the institution’s 2017-18 Faculty Handbook to better understand important aspects of faculty roles, rank, policies, committee structures. The team discovered areas needing further development related to shared

governance and faculty evaluation. The team was especially concerned to learn from the dean of faculty during the visit that important sections of the Faculty Handbook had been written in response to the team's pre-visit request for a copy of the Faculty Handbook. Further, portions of the Faculty Handbook were primarily developed by the dean of faculty with limited review by faculty, other administrators, or external consultants and legal counsel. Evidence for widespread participation among the faculty in the revisions to the Faculty Handbook was lacking. The result of this finding illuminated why this newly-minted Faculty Handbook was inconsistent with the Employee Handbook.

The team's main concerns were surrounding policies in the Faculty Handbook in the areas of shared governance, Faculty and Academic Affairs committees, evaluation of students and faculty, and faculty scholarship.

### *Shared Governance*

The institution's Special Visit report outlined academic policy-making committees (Faculty Affairs Committee, Academic Affairs Committee, Admissions Committee, President's Cabinet). However, the team found little in the Faculty Handbook that clearly and unambiguously articulated faculty roles and responsibilities in shared governance or in articulating faculty workloads. The Faculty Handbook stated, "The dean of faculty is responsible for all matters relating to the academic mission of the College, the curriculum, graduation requirements, academic policies, academic credit offerings including the Summer Arabic Intensive program, degree and certificate credit programs, the Honors Program, and academic events such as College-sponsored academic lecture series and conference, development of textbooks by the faculty for instruction at

the College, co-curricular activities for learning outside the classroom, mentoring and advising of students, and budget development and administration for the faculty and academic affairs division.”

As the team examined each description of every academic policy-making committee, it was not clear where, if at all, there was separation of powers between administrators and faculty in making academic policy. The team found, for example, that the president was a member of the Faculty Affairs Committee, inviting deeper concerns around how faculty have the expected role in shared governance and decision making. Further, the Faculty Handbook did not clarify which responsibilities are primarily owned by the faculty and which by the dean of faculty, who holds power in decision making, and who charged with primary responsibility for overseeing the curriculum. [CFRs 3.2, 3.10]

The team found the lack of clarity between the roles, rights, and responsibilities between faculty and administrators mirrored the raised about the board and president being too engaged in day-do-day management and in academic policy making. The team suggests the institution re-examine academic policy committees to ensure that faculty take primary leadership roles on academic policy and curriculum. The team further recommends the institution clarify the roles and responsibilities of each level of faculty. The team found statements in the handbook such as, “All members of the faculty, both full and part-time, are members of the committee with equal rights and status” (p. 6) that raised further questions and concerns regarding faculty policy. For example, do part-time faculty include adjuncts? Are part-time faculty or adjuncts paid for their services beyond teaching? What are the respective roles of core (full-time) and

part-time faculty in relation to academic policy making? Do faculty, regardless of level, have equal weight in decision making? These questions raised for the team the need for greater clarity in delineating the roles and rights of various faculty in the institution.

The team found redundancies and conflict of roles between the Faculty Affairs Committee and Academic Affairs Committees, both chaired by dean of faculty. For example, as chair of the committees and ex-officio member, “the chairpersonship may be rotated to a faculty or staff member if needed at the discretion of the dean of faculty for a term ranging from one semester to no more than two years.”

First, the duties of these committees are not clearly differentiated and it appears that there were no shared governance committees without senior leadership participation. Additionally, senior leadership holds final authority on many decisions pertaining to faculty and the curriculum. The team strongly encourages partnership with the faculty to come up with clearer statements about the role of shared governance at Zaytuna and ensure that committee structures and responsibilities are clearly identified in a way that is aligned with this statement.

#### *Policies on Evaluation of Students and of Faculty*

According to the Zaytuna Assessment Cycle (Attachment 23), the Office of the dean of faculty alone was responsible and charged with the learning assessment process. The role of the faculty in choosing, creating, evaluating, and owning the assessment of student learning was absent in the document and unclear to the team during the visit. Since the Faculty Handbook is very specific in stating that these summative assessments are, in some cases, the sole responsibility of the Office of the Dean of the Faculty, there is concern about faculty involvement in this part of the

academic assessment process. [CFR 2.4] Although faculty were involved in some aspects of supervising student theses, the senior thesis is described as belonging “to the office of the dean of faculty to oversee, develop, and assess the Senior Thesis process.” (Faculty Handbook, p. 18). Although in meetings with faculty during the Special Visit, a somewhat different approach to senior thesis evaluation was described that invoked that the Office of the Dean to make decisions on when senior theses might result in graduation with honors when decisions were in question, the process remained ambiguously described. Greater clarity is needed to identify the respective roles of faculty and the dean of faculty as it relates to student learning assessment.

The team also found a lack of clarity of faculty role in academic governance. For example, it was not clear how the rubric for classroom evaluation of instruction had been created and was evaluated. The decision to move from a quantitative to a narrative process of faculty evaluation was not, in the materials provided, clearly supported through data or rationale. Overall, the team found this as further evidence that greater clarity was needed about how faculty were involved in curricular decision making and assurance that faculty governance procedures within the institution were well understood by all constituents.

### *Role of Scholarship*

The team’s review of the Faculty Handbook and through interviews revealed a need for the institution to clarify publishing and research expectations for faculty at all ranks. The self study report states, “Our new full-time faculty are currently teaching and doing research in the areas of: Arabic Language; Philosophy; Theology; Grammar; Logic; Western Literature; Rhetoric; Islamic Law; U.S. History; Ancient History; Politics;

and Ethics” (p. 19). If junior faculty are expected to “do research”, the team recommends these duties to be built into their time allocation and into the evaluation processes. In the Faculty Handbook, only full professors have scholarly expectations or job duty requirements. However, in order to be considered for full professor, there is an expectation for scholarly contributions. The team suggests a need for clearer policies of research (scholarship) and a deeper alignment with practice, in order to support the expectations of assistant and associate professors who desire to become full professors.

Further, the team suggests the institution address scholarship expectations and consider allowances made for time and research support among all ranks as outlined in the SAV report recommendation for the institution to “articulate a policy that appropriately defines research, scholarship, creative activity, and service; and also incorporate these activities into faculty work assignments and evaluations” (SAV Report, p. 19).

### *Additional Policy Issues*

Upon careful review of all sections in the Faculty Handbook, the team found additional policy issues that lacked clarity.

**Ethics.** The team found that ethics standards work best when they are clearly stated, reasonable, and enforced fairly and with a defined process. In this case, “established norms” were not referenced. Consideration should be given to a) identifying specific ethical standards that apply to faculty, staff, and students, creating an explicit process for what is to be done when the ethical standards appear to have been violated, and developing a formal appeal process when adjudication of ethical

complaints have resulted in the conclusion that violations occurred. The role of senior leadership in decision makers (versus serving as appeal authorities) should also be carefully considered.

**Grievances.** The grievance process identifies only “Academic freedom, unlawful discrimination and/or any form of harassment” as the bases for which a faculty grievance may be filed. The team suggests the institution consider a wider range of grievances that may be filed (e.g., faculty evaluations, promotions, problematic supervision). The policy does not specify who appoints the “committee consisting of 2-3 faculty and 1-2 staff members.” It is not clear whether the faculty member filing a grievance has a say in whether there are 2 or 3 faculty or 1 or 2 staff members or why staff members are automatically included on the grievance panels. It is also not clear whether faculty members filing grievances have appeal rights. No criteria are specified as to the circumstances under which the dean of faculty refers the matter to the president, nor are criteria identified for when the decision can be made by the dean of faculty or president, as stated in the policy. Grievance processes should have as little ambiguity as possible so that faculty can be assured of fair processes.

**Hiring.** The team examined the process of hiring new faculty and found issues pertaining to the hiring policy. Assuming that it is “...determined that existing faculty are unable or unqualified to meet the existing or expanding offerings,” it is not clear why it would then be expected that those same faculty are qualified to “collectively discuss and entertain names of potential candidates in the area in a dedicated hiring meeting.” The team suggests the institution examine best practices in higher education, including forming a search committee and letting the search committee do a proper search for the

new positions, including a well-defined job analysis. The team found the triggers for a search committee in the Faculty Handbook to be unclear and recommends clarification of the procedures in this section.

**Revisions to the Faculty Handbook.** In moving forward, the role of the faculty in any revisions to the Faculty Handbook needs to be more clearly articulated. It is not clear which group has the authority to make decisions representing the faculty's views. Except for changes that are articulated in advance as belonging to the board or management, the process for faculty input and approval remains to be specified. The team recommends the institution look into best practices in higher education, such as a Faculty Senate, to approve changes to the Faculty Handbook. Absent a Faculty Senate, the team encourages Zaytuna to have a process in place by which faculty can, as a group, vote on any revisions to the Faculty Handbook.

### *Conclusion*

The team found some advancement in policy making since the last visit, particularly in the Employee Handbook, since the last site visit. However, it also found that faculty policies need significantly more work. The institution should consider developing a "policy on policies" to articulate a generic process for policy development, review, approval, and periodic evaluation to ensure institutional effectiveness and stay agile to upcoming changes.

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

The team reviewed Zaytuna College's Special Visit Self-Study Report and requested additional direct evidence prior to the visit. As a result of meetings with board

members, administrators, faculty, staff, and students, the team was impressed by the institution's commitment to their furthering their distinct institutional mission and their deep desire to engage the team and strive toward institutional improvement.

The next steps for the institution in preparation for their accreditation visit in the fall of 2019 require a continual demonstration of progress in the areas of board development, institutional research, and policies, as well as ongoing commitment to the WSCUC standards for review.

The WSCUC peer review team commends the institution for:

1. Its considerable success in advancement and in acquiring highly desirable Berkeley Hills real estate in an effort to expand its campus
2. Its inspiring mission and steadfast commitment to cultivate spiritual and intellectual leaders grounded in the Islamic tradition
3. Offering strongly competitive compensation to recruit and retain qualified faculty committed to the mission and vision of the college
4. Recruiting and appointing highly qualified new board members, expanding needed expertise on the board
5. Deliberately dedicating resources to develop internal institutional research capacity and for the Office of Institutional Research's proactive approach in educating and facilitating the campus' use of IR capacity

The WSCUC peer review team recommends the institution:

1. Establish clear board policies, procedures and criteria for evaluation of the president, placing in writing, clear performance standards for conducting formal yearly evaluation. [CFR 3.9]

2. Engage in both board and outside counsel regarding the roles of the three founders of Zaytuna as full, voting board members while holding other leadership positions at the College. This practice presents a potential conflict of roles. [CFR 3.9]
3. Adopt best practices of the operation of college governing Boards (e.g., standard formatting of, and more detailed, minutes; ongoing training of all Board members, and mentoring of new Board members). The bylaws of the Board also need to be rewritten with outside counsel to reflect current best practices. [CFR 3.7]
4. Formally incorporate the use of IR capacity to assist decision-making and planning in its core quality assurance processes such as learning outcome assessment and program review. [CFR 4.1]
5. Continue to develop its IR capacity, especially in gathering direct evidence for student learning, and to appropriately share data externally, including publishing data of student success [CFRs 1.2, 4.2]
6. Review the recently developed Faculty Handbook with faculty to reach agreement on the content of the Handbook. The content of the Faculty Handbook needs to be coordinated with the Employee Handbook to assure that the two documents are aligned when appropriate. Finally, the Faculty Handbook should receive legal review before being finalized. [CFR 3.2]
7. Revisit the Faculty Handbook to include a section explicitly articulating the institution's philosophy and approach to shared governance. The functions and potential overlap of the various committees involved in academic governance should be reviewed. The respective roles of the board (including its Education

Committee), the provost and academic dean, and the current (or revised) committees for faculty input and decision making should clearly be stated. [CFR 3.10]