

REPORT OF THE WSCUC VISITING TEAM

SEEKING ACCREDITATION VISIT 1

For Institutions Seeking Initial Accreditation

To: Universidad de Las Américas (UDLA)

Dates of visit: October 13 - 15, 2015

Team Roster

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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

Universidad de las Américas (UDLA) is a private-not-for-profit institution located in Quito, Ecuador, founded in 1994 at what is now the Colón Campus. UDLA received official recognition from the Ecuadorian government in 1995, as the country was embarking on a major overhaul of education and opening the doors for private institutions to participate in addressing unmet needs in postsecondary education. Twenty years later, UDLA has grown into a four-campus university, in close physical proximity in the city of Quito, that as of Spring 2015 serves close to 15,000 students (Colón Campus - 1,617; UDLAPark Campus - 3,897; Granados Campus - 4,151; Queri Campus - 5,090).

As noted in their Strategic Plan 2015-2019, the mission of UDLA is to form capable, enterprising individuals with an international perspective and a firm commitment to society, based on ethical principles and values. The vision of UDLA is to create a model for Ecuadorian higher education and build a proud student community committed to the country, which supports the personal and professional success of its members and is integrated with the international academic community. In its Strategic Plan UDLA has identified appropriate and meaningful objectives for the next five years (UDLA Strategic Plan 2015-2019, pages 23-25).

For many private institutions in Ecuador, the intensified regulatory scrutiny of the past few years has brought with it an additional challenge of financing improvement plans, but UDLA has a healthy financial situation that permits it to continue investing in quality initiatives that provide a solid foundation for the future. Initially, UDLA focused on a few baccalaureate and first professional degree programs in areas related to business, communications, and law. The university has now grown to more than 30 baccalaureate and first-professional degree programs across the disciplines: health sciences, engineering, architecture and design, education, gastronomy, tourism, psychology, film, and music. The majority of UDLA's student population is undergraduate (12,532 or 84.9%). UDLA also began offering

associate and technical degrees in 2005. These degree programs total 1,537 students (10.4%). UDLA's first graduate program, the Master's in Business Administration, was offered in 2006. Graduate programs have now expanded to include 686 students (4.6%). When UDLA initiated the process with WSCUC in 2011, the number of full-time faculty stood at 140, supported by an additional 652 part-time faculty. Today, UDLA is supported by 766 full-time and 374 part-time teachers, counting all those at both the faculty and instructor levels (see "The Report on Current Faculty and Future Staffing Plans", page 1).

Beginning in 2005 an affiliation with Laureate Education, Inc. (Laureate) helped stimulate innovation at UDLA as well as the implementation of many best practices in university management. The relationship with Laureate has changed significantly over the last decade, from Laureate holding initially a majority representation in the governance of UDLA to one where Laureate has divested its interests (due to changes in higher education regulations in Ecuador) and now is limited to service agreements covering consulting for products and services. Accordingly, UDLA is an autonomous university, as evidenced in its institutional bylaws, and is also an active independent member of the Laureate International Universities network.

As noted in its Self Study (SS) UDLA became interested in WSCUC accreditation for a number of reasons. First, the university is committed to internationalization in higher education, and to meeting internationally recognized standards of quality. Second, the regional accreditation system in the United States has a long and successful history of contributing to an excellent higher education system. In the context of the recent dramatic changes in the Ecuadorian higher education landscape, UDLA considers that the mature regional accreditation offered in the US offers much needed stability and consistency. WSCUC accreditation uses established criteria that take into account the institution's mission and identity, and through an in-depth self-study, it encourages institutional learning that has an intrinsic value greater than the results of the accreditation process.

UDLA's journey to this current stage of seeking Initial Accreditation with the WASC Senior College and University Commission began with conversations in 2010. At that time, WSCUC did not yet have a pathway to accreditation for international institutions that were not already affiliated with an institution in its region, but the positive reception encouraged UDLA to maintain the dialogue, and in August 2011 the university invited WSCUC staff and Commission members to visit. After WSCUC created a formal process for international institutions in 2012, UDLA submitted its Initial Application in August of that year, and WSCUC approved it in September. In January 2014, UDLA submitted its Eligibility Application, and a WSCUC Eligibility Review Commission panel granted UDLA Eligibility in April 2014. Since 2012, UDLA has participated in the Annual Resource Conference (ARC) meetings, which afford valuable opportunities to share and learn best practices from WSCUC member institutions.

The WSCUC Team visited UDLA from October 12-15, 2015. Prior to the formal visit the team met in Quito to finalize its plans the afternoon of October 12, and then was hosted by leadership at a welcome reception at the UDLAPark Campus that evening. On October 13 and 14 the team met with university administration, full-time and part-time faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, the UDLA WSCUC Steering Committee, relevant institutional committees (e.g., Program Review and Continuous Improvement, Assessment/Curriculum), members of the UDLA Higher Council, the UDLA Advisory Board, and the Chair of the UDLA Advisory Board (a former President of Ecuador). Over the course of the visit, the team was able to tour and inspect the UDLAPark Campus, Granados Campus, and Queri Campus (see Appendix A for a copy of the team visit schedule).

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

UDLA is accredited by the Council for Evaluation, Accreditation, and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CEAACES, after its initials in Spanish), the higher education accrediting body in Ecuador. This accreditation was awarded in November 2013 for the maximum period of five years. CEAACES is also

responsible for all programmatic accreditation in Ecuador. UDLA's Medicine program was accredited in June 2015, one of the 10 institutions to achieve this out of 22 possible.

On April 18, 2014, a panel of the WSCUC Eligibility Review Committee (ERC) conducted its evaluation of UDLA's application and granted them eligibility, giving them until April 15, 2018 to achieve candidacy. UDLA identified three broad outcomes for its SAV 1 Visit, which represents for the most part a further development of processes that have been in place throughout the eligibility process:

1. What are students learning? Addressed through development of systematic learning outcomes at all levels, including curriculum mapping for all programs.
2. How well are students learning? Addressed through the establishment of performance standards to facilitate measurement of student progress and achievement.
3. How do we know? Addressed through development of systems to collect and analyze data at all levels to feed into program review.

UDLA described a robust process for preparing for the SAV 1 visit, led by administrators but with meaningful participation by faculty and other stakeholders. The actual SS submitted to the team was consistent with the outcomes and process stated in the Letter of Intent.

The overall quality of the SS submitted by UDLA was high; it reflected both extensive work and commitment by the institution at all levels to engage in evidence-based self-examination in light of WSCUC standards. The report provided a useful and reliable resource for the visit team to orient to the institution and its context and identify likely areas for productive inquiry during the visit. The report itself was well written and clearly organized, and the team was able to confirm that it accurately represented the institution. The review and report preparation was made a very high priority by the institution, and was driven by a dedicated administrator, supported by a multi-person staff. During the visit, the team was able to confirm that a wide range of faculty were very involved in most steps of the process, and the faculty as a whole were informed and had thoughtful reflections on the report. The SS

is straightforward in identifying institutional weaknesses in light of WSCUC standards, and while some issues required more careful exploration and discussion during the visit, the SS did not read like a sales report attempting to spin or cover up problems. The SS did include reference to a wide and deep array of relevant evidence, though in some respects the institution is still in early stages of learning how to reflect on this evidence and draw necessary and cogent conclusions, and this was at times evident in the report. However, it is clear from reading the SS, and was confirmed by the team in multiple conversations during the visit, that UDLA made excellent use of the process to better understand its mission, both its strengths and weaknesses, and create and implement processes designed to create a culture of ongoing, evidenced-based self-improvement.

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

The ERC had six major recommendations for UDLA:

1. Criteria 4: Continue finding ways to be in compliance with WSCUC's Independent Governing Board Policy

The SS demonstrated that UDLA had begun to address this recommendation. As of the SS, UDLA had completed plans on developing the independent "Advisory Board" to provide non-binding feedback and recommendations to the nationally mandated Higher Council, which is not independent but must be by law the final authority on institutional governance. As of the writing of the SS the Advisory Council had not yet met, nor had all its members been appointed. These issues of institutional governance were a priority during the visit to assess any relevant progress, and are addressed in detail in the report (see pages 32 to 33).

2. Criteria 5: Develop a formal performance review process for the Rector (CFR 3.9)

The SS indicated that the task of reviewing the performance of the Rector (the university president) would be assigned to the new Advisory Board. At UDLA the CEO is not appointed by an independent Board but elected to five-year terms (with a maximum of two terms) by the

entire university community as stipulated in the bylaws and per the Ecuadorean Law of Higher Education. This was also a high priority item for the team during the visit, and is discussed in Section II (see page 31).

3. Criteria 11: Prepare a crosswalk between Ecuadorian and WASC credit hour requirements (CFR 2.1 and WASC Credit Hour Policy)

The SS did address the credit hour issue, but given the norms governing credit allocation in Ecuador, this proved to be fairly complicated. This is discussed in Section II (see pages 14 to 15).

4. Criteria 14: Find solutions for hiring more faculty with terminal degrees (CFR 3.1)

The SS reported that from 2013 to 2015 there was improvement in faculty qualifications as those with master's degrees increased from 40% to 80%. In the case of faculty with a doctorate, the numbers went from 3% to 6% in part due to the small number of people with doctorate degrees nation wide. UDLA has also traditionally relied heavily on part-time faculty. The SS referred to goals and plans for addressing these problems, which clearly still persisted. These issues are addressed in detail in Section II (see pages 25 to 26).

5. Criteria 15: Continue efforts to improve retention and graduation rates (CFR 1.2)

The ERC noted that UDLA was collecting both retention and graduation rate data, but needed to do more to appropriately contextualize them, understand them, and take steps to improve them. The SS indicated that UDLA had not made much progress in this area. This is discussed in detail in Section II (see pages 9 to 10).

6. Criteria 17: Increase library holdings - physical and electronic (CFR 2.13 and 3.5)

The ERC had concerns about the small size of the physical collection in the library (19,000 titles) and the need for more emphasis on information literacy and increasing the electronic database resources. The SS indicated that UDLA had increased the library budget, and that holdings had been increased to 24,540. The SS also indicated that electronic databases had been expanded,

but there were some problems in fully addressing this issue. This is discussed in detail in Section II (see page 31).

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

STANDARD 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

The institution defines its purposes and establishes educational objectives aligned with those purposes. The institution has a clear and explicit sense of its essential values and character, its distinctive elements, its place in both the higher education community and society, and its contribution to the public good. It functions with integrity, transparency, and autonomy.

CFR 1.1: Formally approved, appropriate statements of purpose that define values and character

The team did not discover any concerns with this CFR. UDLA does have an appropriate, formally approved and published mission statement: “The mission of the university is to form capable, enterprising individuals with an international perspective and a firm commitment to society, based on ethical principles and values.” (SS page 12; also on school website). These purposes and values of the university clearly do fall within recognized academic areas.

CFR 1.2: Clear educational objectives; indicators of student achievement at institution, program and course levels; retention/graduation data and evidence of student learning made public Integrity and Transparency

The team found that UDLA’s progress on CFR 1.2 was uneven. Appropriate institutional learning objectives have been developed, and are published on the university website (as reported in the SS, page 14). During interviews with both faculty and students, the team found deep and widespread knowledge and understanding of these outcomes. The team was particularly impressed with the ability of undergraduate students to cite and apply institutional learning outcomes to explain and evaluate such experiences as internships, laboratories, and thesis projects. This represents the success of a campaign, whose need and nature was described in the SS, to better inform students about the institutional learning outcomes.

More problematically, while UDLA does regularly collect relevant student achievement data like retention and graduation rates, it still does not does not publish this data on its web site (or make it

available in any other form). The reasons for this are clear and understandable – no comparable data from peer institutions is available to contextualize retention and graduation rates, in large part because the relevant national agency does not disseminate it (see SS, page 15). Without this context, UDLA is concerned that publishing its data would put it at an unfair competitive disadvantage. While understandable, the team continues to share the ERC’s concerns about the lack of transparency. The team strongly recommends that UDLA find a way to make student achievement data readily accessible to the public, even if it must write its own contextualizing narrative to take the place of comparative peer data.

CFR 1.3: Academic freedom: policies and practices

UDLA adopted a formal policy on Academic Freedom in June 2012. The policy is available online and included in the Faculty and Student handbooks. It defines academic freedom as “the freedom to learn, teach, and grow, whether as individuals or as an institution.” In addition Articles 42 and 43 of UDLA’s bylaws state that the concept of responsible autonomy consists of “independence such that professors and researchers in the universities and polytechnics will exercise freedom to teach and research.”

The Team discovered no evidence that there have been any violations of the policy, and uncovered no concerns about academic freedom in any of the many meetings with faculty, staff, students and alumni. UDLA’s Higher Council approved a Grievance Procedure in 2015 to ensure that any future concerns about threats to academic freedom are dealt with in a fair and systematic manner (SS, page 16).

CFR 1.4: Diversity: policies, programs, and practices

UDLA has in place policies consistent with the Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action Policy (2013), relating to the establishment and encouragement of diversity within its student body, faculty, and staff. This is further strengthened by UDLA’s Human Resources and Academic Policies (2014), which reinforce the institution’s commitment to diversity and the inclusion of persons with disabilities along

with the provision of equal access and appropriate services. The Team found that UDLA's practices provide evidence that these policies are taken seriously and are effective.

UDLA is a reflection of the cultural pattern throughout Ecuador, a country known for both its distinctive geographic characteristics and varied cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and socioeconomic population. From a geographical perspective, 60% of the student population comes from outside Quito while 40% is from the greater metropolitan area. UDLA's full-time faculty contains more ethnic minorities (38% minority, 62% Mestizo) than the national population (10% minority, 90% Mestizo). The gender composition of UDLA's FT faculty and staff is: faculty - 56% male and 44% female; staff - 51% male and 49% female ("Report on Current Faculty and Future Staffing Plans", pages 1-2).

CFR 1.5: Education as primary purpose; autonomy from external entities

UDLA does not have an autonomous, independent governing board. Its ultimate decision making body is called the Higher Council, made up of institutional employees (the largest block being faculty) and chaired by the Rector, all as mandated by Ecuadorian law. This is discussed in more detail under CFR 3.9, starting on page 32 to 33.

When the WSCUC accreditation process began, Laureate held a majority ownership position in UDLA. However, as a result of changing regulations in Ecuadorean higher education starting in 2010, the only relationship between UDLA and Laureate resides in three agreements that involve access to best practices, information technology, and intellectual property. Accordingly, UDLA is now completely autonomous and independent from Laureate (SS, page 19).

CFR 1.6: Truthful representation to students and the public; fair and equitable policies; timely completion

After review of the SS, published policies, and interviews with students, alumni, staff, faculty and administrators, the team did not identify any concerns about the truthful representation or fairness of UDLA's policies.

Graduation rates (presented for five years, seven years, and to date for cohorts from 2004 to 2008, in a rough equivalence of expected completion intervals in the US) are lower compared to graduation rates commonly reported by comparable US institutions. The average seven-year graduation rate from 2004-2008 is 30.3%; 32.7% when restricted to daytime programs. This discrepancy is due in part to a national requirement for undergraduate students to complete a major thesis, due within a year after completion of coursework but prior to granting of the degree. Large fractions of students who have completed all other degree requirements fail to complete the thesis, and so do not graduate. The evidence suggests that a significant number of students are not completing their program in a timely manner. UDLA has instituted policies and practices to improve these outcomes, including early identification of at-risk students and provision of support services. Additionally, UDLA has begun implementation of government-mandated plan to offer students who had fulfilled all requirements except the thesis an opportunity to complete the degree through a comprehensive exam.

As noted above in the discussion of CFR 1.2, UDLA is not making public its completion data, as it is not currently customary in Ecuador. The team found this to be a weakness in regards to UDLA's transparent representation to the public, and while cognizant of the challenges, recommends that the university find a way to be more transparent.

CFR 1.7: Operational integrity; sound business practices; timely and fair responses to complaints; evaluation of institutional performance

The evidence reviewed by the team, including financial records and interviews with financial and operational officers, supports the institution's assertions that it is in healthy financial shape and has strong operational integrity. The team discovered nothing to raise questions about these areas. UDLA's business practices are consistent with expectations. Documentation reviewed by the WSCUC Team included the UDLA Code of Conduct and Ethics, which states, "UDLA is committed to acting honestly and ethically." The Code of Conduct also affirms that, "UDLA is committed to compliance with all laws applicable to its operations." The institution has a Student Code of Conduct that is included in the

Student Handbook. Since 2011, UDLA has implemented a “311” helpline to handle questions and channel complaints for their timely resolution.

CFR 1.8 - Honest, open communication with WSCUC including notification of material matters; implementation of WSCUC policies

UDLA has communicated well with WSCUC and has been responsive to the team’s request for documents and information prior to and during the visit, keeping in mind the additional demands required to translate some of the requested materials into English. Relevant documents were duly signed and submitted by the UDLA Board in June 2012 and in April 2013, and, more recently with its formal Application for Accreditation in November of 2014, the UDLA Higher Council expressed its utmost willingness to abide by WSCUC standards, policies, and procedures.

Standard Two: Achieving Educational Functions through Core Functions

The institution achieves its purposes and attains its educational objectives at the institutional and program level through the core functions of teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, and support for student learning and success. The institution demonstrates that these core functions are performed effectively by evaluating valid and reliable evidence of learning and by supporting the success of every student.

CFR 2.1: Programs appropriate in content, standards, degree level; sufficient qualified faculty

UDLA offers associate, baccalaureate, first-professional and graduate degrees in recognized academic disciplines and they appear to be appropriate in content, standards of performance, rigor, and nomenclature. The team reviewed the catalog, course syllabi, degree profiles and program learning outcomes in order to reach this conclusion.

All UDLA’s degrees and programs conform to the guidelines and requirements that were in place in Ecuador at the time of their implementation. However, national regulations were revised following the enactment of Higher Education Law of 2010 and the issuance of new Academic Regulations in 2013 (subsequently revised again in 2014). These new regulations stipulate that all programs will have a degree profile and program learning outcomes and conform to UNESCO’s International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). In addition, the regulations place increased emphasis on general

education and core competencies and achieving intermediate level competence in a foreign language. UDLA is currently updating standards and requirements for its academic programs in order to comply more fully with the new regulations. All programs have developed degree profiles and program learning outcomes and the institution anticipates meeting the current April 2016 deadline for submittal of proposals to CES (the Ecuadorian regulatory agency for higher education) for review and approval.

National regulations also address the issue of program length and credit hour. According to the institutional report, “these new regulations do not specify credits but rather total hours in a degree program” and are representative of an “overall shift to outcomes-based teaching and learning”. To facilitate the implementation of the new guidelines, UDLA revised its academic credit policy in 2014 placing increased emphasis on out-of-class learning. According to the new policy, class sessions are now 60 minutes long, and the institution expects the ratio of class time to independent work to be 1:1.5; thus a course that meets twice a week for a total of 2 hours will be worth 3 semester credits (UDLA’s Academic Credit Hour Policy).

Team members invested significant time and effort reviewing UDLA’s policy on academic credit. In addition to reviewing syllabi that explicitly identify required out-of-class work, they explored this issue during their conversations with administrators, faculty and students. They found that, through the adoption of an online learning environment (virtual classroom) for every class, the faculty are able to consistently assign, monitor and evaluate out-of class work.

The ERC had found that while UDLA’s policy for granting academic credit followed good practice in higher education in Latin America, the university needed to prepare crosswalks to document how “its credit hour policies compare to what is expected in the United States under WSCUC requirements with a possible focus on total hours a student spends getting a degree”. In response, the institution’s report provided an explanation of its Academic Credit Hour Policy as well as a table (Table 4) comparing CES (Council for Higher Education) 2009 and 2013 regulations and US expectations. While this table seemed

initially to fall somewhat short of the specific crosswalk asked for, after careful study and consultation the team concluded that the only significant differences between UDLA's requirements and US expectations are in some professional degrees (Medicine, Law, Dentistry and Veterinary), which in the US are graduate level programs.

The ERC also found that percentage of faculty members holding the appropriate terminal degree at UDLA was far too low: only 9% of faculty had an equivalent of a PhD and 40% a Master's degree. In response, UDLA invested about \$7.5 million in hiring more full-time faculty and more faculty with terminal degrees. As a result, the number of full-time faculty members has increased significantly but hiring faculty members with doctoral degrees remains a challenge. Accordingly, the team recommends that UDLA continue investing in faculty and supporting faculty in the pursuit of doctoral degrees (Also see CFR 3.1).

CFR 2.2: Clearly defined degrees re: admission requirements and levels of achievement for graduation; processes to ensure meaning, quality and integrity of degrees

UDLA admission requirements for both undergraduate and graduate degree programs are clearly defined. Admission to its undergraduate programs requires a high school diploma from an institution recognized by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education. In addition, students must pass an examination to measure aptitude in core areas and some programs (such as Medicine, Health Sciences, Music and Psychology) have additional requirements. Newly admitted students must also take placement tests in Mathematics and English.

According to the institution's report, UDLA is committed to providing access to a broad segment of the population. However, it recognizes that in, "the context of a secondary school system with real disparities, students tend to exhibit deficiencies in the areas of mathematics, language arts and foreign languages." Faced with this challenge, UDLA is developing support programs to help students make a successful transition to the university (Also see CFR 2.12 & 2.13). For example, undergraduate students' performance is tracked individually and linked to the high school from which they graduated. When

patterns of deficiency are identified with a particular high school, UDLA faculty will go to that high school and conduct development workshops for their faculty in order to improve student outcomes.

Graduate programs require a baccalaureate degree from a recognized institution and program-specific exams and interviews. In conversations with team members, several graduate students singled out the admission process as one of the strengths of the institution.

UDLA has a coherent philosophy expressed in its Educational Model and the institution has developed and adopted degree profiles that provide a clear statement of expectations for graduates.

2.2a: Undergraduate degree requirements, including general education and core competencies

UDLA's baccalaureate programs engage students in an integrated course of study of sufficient breadth and depth. WSCUC's five core competencies are integrated into the curriculum and aligned between ILOs and PLOs. Indeed, at the time of the eligibility review, the panel observed that UDLA had developed a General Education program that met "WSCUC's expected outcomes perhaps better than many universities in WSCUC's region." The team verified this level of development during the visit.

UDLA's approach to G.E., which is unique in South America, is modeled after initiatives such as the LEAP project of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. The institution has established a School of General Education with a dean and 3 departments (Humanities, Mathematics and Physics, and Foreign Languages) but also follows an embedded approach to GE and students can select courses from the School of General Education and from "trans-disciplinary" courses offered by other departments.

2.2b: Graduate degree requirements clearly stated and appropriate

Through its College of Graduate Programs, UDLA currently offers the following graduate degrees: Masters in Business Administration, Corporate and Institutional Communication (DIRCOM), Operations and Industrial Security, IT and Systems Management, Journalism, and Biomedical Sciences; and Dental Specialization in Orthodontics, Dental Specialization in Oral Rehabilitation and Specialization in Healthcare Administration.

Two additional programs (Master's in Agribusiness with Emphasis in Food Safety and Master's in Branding) that were in the planning stages at the time of Eligibility have been recently approved by CES and will be offered as of November 2015.

As indicated above (CFR 2.2), UDLA establishes, communicates and distinguishes objectives in terms of admission and curricula at the master's level as compared to the bachelor's level. Graduate programs have established their own PLOs aligned with the institutional learning outcomes and have also developed standards of performance that are differentiated from those of undergraduate programs.

Although graduate programs represent a small percentage of UDLA's total enrollment (approximately 700 from among nearly 15,000), they are seen as an important growth area by the institution given the critical importance of graduate study opportunities for Ecuador.

Because these programs are designed for working professionals, the institution seeks to meet their needs by offering evening and weekend classes organized into modules. The exception to this delivery model is the Master's in Biomedical Sciences, UDLA's only research degree, which schedules courses and laboratory work during the daytime. During meetings and conversations with team members, both alumni and current students were passionate in expressing their appreciation for the quality of their experience at UDLA and the opportunities awarded to them to obtain career advancement as well as making a contribution to the common good.

According to WSCUC's guidelines, institutions offering graduate level programs are expected to employ at least one full-time faculty member for each degree offered. In UDLA's case, most of the teaching faculty in the College of Graduate Programs are not full-time but every program does have a director and at least one full-time faculty member. It appears that, while most faculty members in the Master's of Biomedical Research and DIRCOM programs hold doctorate or M.D. degrees, the majority of faculty members in the Journalism and Operations and Industrial Security programs hold Masters degrees. (Also see CFRs 2.1 and 3.1).

According to the SS, the College of Graduate Programs has made progress in developing a culture of graduate studies through the establishment of dedicated research institutes and centers and by hosting national and international events such as the first Iberoamerican Congress in Communication in March 2015 (Also see CFRs 3.1 and 3.5). In conversations with the team, several faculty members also highlighted the fact that their programs publish professional journals.

CFR 2.3: Student learning outcomes (SLOs) and expectations for student learning at all levels; reflected in curricula, programs, policies, advising

UDLA is exemplary in its commitment to developing a culture of evidence. It has developed ILOs drawing upon the work of the Lumina Degree Qualifications Profile and the AAC&U LEAP project, identified PLOs (aligned with the overarching ILOs) and developed CLOs are listed in all syllabi. All programs have developed standards of performance aligned to the institutional standards and completed curriculum maps. Every syllabus sampled listed course learning outcomes and evaluation criteria.

Most of UDLA's programs require students to complete pre-professional internships and, in the future, service-learning activities will also be required in compliance with national regulations. Team members reviewed a number of placement agreements and internship reports and found that the institution has established policies and procedures to ensure that out-of-class learning experiences are well developed and subject to appropriate oversight.

CFR 2.4: Faculty's collective responsibility for setting SLOs and standards, assessing student learning, demonstrating achievement of standards

In accordance with the process detailed in UDLA's Manual for Degree Profile and Program Learning Outcomes, degree profiles and PLOs are developed and reviewed by faculty members in the curriculum committee (comprised of faculty and one student) and later reviewed and approved by the dean of the college or school and the Academic Vice-Rector before submittal to the Academic Council. Standards of performance are developed by faculty task forces and subsequently approved by the Academic Council.

Learning outcomes are shared with external stakeholders and UDLA surveys graduates, employers and professionals to validate the relevance of PLOs.

CFR 2.5: Students actively involved in learning and challenged; feedback on learning provided

UDLA's Educational Model articulates the philosophy of the university regarding the student-centered design of curriculum and highlights the importance of active learning. The educational model also informs the university's approach to assessment that encourages both formative and summative evaluation. For example, the grading system divides the semester into three partial terms and requires reporting each student's progress at the end of each period. These partial progress reports ensure students receive formal feedback at least twice before the course concludes. They also focus on measuring student's learning throughout the course rather than basing evaluation on a single item such as a final examination.

CFR 2.6: Graduates achieve stated levels of attainment; SLOs embedded in faculty standards for assessing student work

UDLA has invested significant effort and institutional resources on identifying student learning outcomes and in developing its assessment plan and infrastructure. The institution has adopted a multiyear plan that calls for programs to submit annual reports. In addition, UDLA requires all programs to include a capstone project to ensure that its graduates have achieved institutional and program learning outcomes. In addition to direct assessment through the capstone project, UDLA also utilizes indirect assessment measures such as its annual Employability Survey.

While UDLA is to be commended for developing a culture of assessment, the data collected is relatively recent and, therefore, the institution should continue to collect evidence of student learning outcomes so that it can demonstrate that its graduates "consistently achieve its stated learning outcomes and established standards of performance" (CFR 2.6).

CFR 2.7: Program review includes SLOs, retention/graduation data, external evidence and evaluators

By the institution's own admission, program review "is a relatively new element of UDLA's quality

assurance model” (SS, page 46). It began in 2012 with the establishment of a working committee that initially focused its efforts on exploring external accreditation for a small set of programs. Six of these programs (Business Administration, Finance, International Business, Law, Marketing, and Systems Engineering) have subsequently undergone review and achieved programmatic accreditation by the Chilean accrediting agency (Acreditadora de Chile), a rigorous accrediting agency recognized in Latin America. In addition, several programs have been reviewed by the Ecuadorian accrediting agency (CEAACES): Medicine was accredited in June 2015; while Dentistry is awaiting the results of a recent review; and Law, Bilingual Early Childhood Education, and Nursing are scheduled for external review later in the academic year. UDLA is now beginning to evaluate which programs may be ready for international programmatic accreditation through agencies such as the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) and the Association of Advanced Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB).

Following these external programmatic reviews, UDLA developed the policies and infrastructure needed to implement its internal academic program review process. It established a Committee for Internal Evaluation, published a Program Review Guide, created an Office for Academic Effectiveness, appointed a Program Review Manager and adopted a calendar for program review. It is now proceeding with the review of a number of undergraduate programs (also see, CFR 4.1).

The team found that UDLA has made great strides in developing program review, but needs to build on and develop its initial efforts by following the timetable it has established for extending reviews beyond those programs going through external programmatic accreditation and incorporating external peer reviewers. It should also implement its stated intention in the SS to develop a program review process for non-academic areas (such as Library, Counseling, Admissions, and Registrar).

CFR 2.8: Scholarship, creative activity, and curricular and instructional innovation for both students and faculty valued and supported

The team found that UDLA has invested heavily in research since 2008, opening at least two

institutes and building and equipping research facilities and the necessary infrastructure. However, the team suggests that the university find ways to increase the number of students who will have the opportunity to participate in research each semester. While the biomedical researchers have medical degrees, the team suggests that UDLA continue to hire more faculty who have already earned terminal research degrees to enhance the quality and number of research experiences for students, and increase funding for research support throughout the university.

CFR 2.9: Faculty evaluation links scholarship, teaching, student learning, and service

The team appreciated the efforts UDLA has made to improve and develop their policy on tenure and promotion for faculty. The expectations for faculty appointment and promotion in terms of scholarship and teaching are now more clear, and place an explicit emphasis on professional development and evidence of effective teaching. The team also appreciates UDLA's commitment to excellence in teaching, manifested in careful faculty evaluations each semester that have been made part of consideration for promotion (see discussion of CFR 3.2, page 27).

CFR 2.10: Institution identifies and supports needs of students; tracks aggregated and disaggregated student achievement, satisfaction and campus climate; demonstrates students' timely progress

The team affirms UDLA's strategic goal to improve graduation rates and decrease the time to degree completion. While aware of the challenges posed by the national regulation requiring an undergraduate thesis, the team is concerned about the continued low graduation rates. During the visit the team discovered that to date 387 students had taken advantage of the new amnesty program allowing passing of a comprehensive exam in lieu of a thesis. Of these, 325 individuals have passed (84%), 24 have failed (6%) and 38 are in the process of repeating the exam. The team suggests that it will be especially important to monitor the ongoing impact of this exam option on overall graduation rates, as this will help identify how much of the low graduation rate at UDLA is due to the thesis requirement, and how much is due to other, more specific institutional factors.

Financial and academic problems are mentioned in approximately half of all exit interviews when

students leave UDLA prematurely. While financial problems may not be as easily solved, UDLA is addressing the academic issues with their early warning system. Due to Ecuadorian regulations, students may not enroll in a course that they have previously failed three times. Therefore if students repeatedly fail a required course for their chosen degree they are automatically unable to graduate in that field. The early warning system identifies at-risk students on a number of parameters. Once the student has been identified, an appropriate course of action is put in place that may involve numerous departments across campus. This is an ambitious program, with two benefits: direct assistance to at-risk students, and institutional feedback to help identify specific problem areas.

The team was impressed with UDLA's progress on institutional research. The data dashboards provide an efficient way to present data on a multitude of variables. The team encourages UDLA to continue to develop their preliminary efforts to disaggregate data on ethnicity and disability, even though this is not a common practice in Ecuador.

The SS reports that UDLA's one year retention rate for the 2011 and 2012 cohorts was 80% and 76%, respectively, significantly higher than similar rates reported for public institutions in Ecuador (48% and 63%). Their retention rates are reported as being essentially equivalent to peer institutions in Chile (75% for both years). Thus while UDLA's graduation rates appear to be dangerously low, its retention rates appear to be better or in line with other institutions in the region. The team was impressed with UDLA's persistence in finding useful comparison data for retention-rates, but encourages the institution to continue to develop more expertise and systems for systematically interpreting and reflecting upon all institutional data it collects.

CFR 2.11: Co-curricular programs aligned with academic goals and regularly assessed

The team found that UDLA has a growing co-curricular program that is academically aligned and assessed. The primary focus of this so far is the provision of a number of clubs that are active at the different campus locations. These clubs offer co-curricular programming. Participation in clubs is a

required for certain courses while others are primarily for pursuit of personal interests. Fifteen percent of the student population participates in clubs, and UDLA intends to increase this in the near future. The clubs are evaluated at the end of each semester by both students and faculty.

CFR 2.12: Institution provides useful and complete program information and advising

UDLA works with 900 high schools to recruit students through two mechanisms. The first is to provide vocational tests to assist the student in choosing their future career. The second is by providing lectures that the schools request on a variety of subjects such as bullying, sexual orientation, etc. Interested students are able to locate information regarding programming, fees, and the admissions process online at the UDLA website. An annual catalog is published with detailed information on each program. This information is evaluated each year by each program to ensure accuracy and can readily be updated. The admissions office is the main point of contact for potential students. The office is staffed by thoroughly trained consultants; each consultant must complete a 15-day training period and pass a test by at least 80% to begin work. The consultants are able to discuss careers with the potential applicants and assist with program choice; they can also work with students on scholarship applications where tuition payments are challenging. Student services coordinate new student orientation before classes begin each semester. Orientation is offered at each of the campuses and allows the distribution of handbooks, documents and tours. Each program also conducts a program-specific orientation. The team commends the efforts UDLA has invested in ensuring that the admissions and orientation processes are well structured and comprehensive.

CFR 2.13: Appropriate student support services planned, implemented, and evaluated

The student services team is responsible for training all faculty and staff in the student-centered model that UDLA emphasizes. They also analyze data from the student satisfaction survey and provide the metrics for consideration. Some of the survey results UDLA provided the team were not complimentary (e.g., a 9-point reduction in student satisfaction between 2012 and 2014; an 8-point

drop in perceived academic quality over the same period; 78% dissatisfaction in academic infrastructure; 70% dissatisfaction with the new Ecopark campus). However when the team met with students during the visit they were satisfied that their concerns had been addressed and improvements had been made. The team found that the services that the department supplies are effective and well organized. These include improvements in new student orientation, career placement, student health, and alumni relations. The department of student affairs piloted an online preparation program in fall 2014 to reinforce student's core skills that appears to be going well. The team encourages UDLA to monitor this program closely over the next few years to evaluate its benefits to students. Student affairs also provides international programs offering students the opportunity to learn abroad (Switzerland, Spain, Brazil and Argentina), and also brings students from outside Ecuador to UDLA to learn Spanish.

The team was concerned with the adequacy of staffing for the large number of support services provided by the department of student affairs. UDLA has increased the counseling and vocational guidance staff from 1 in 2013 to 4 in 2015; however, staffing still appears to the team to be inadequate for the number of students that need to be served. The team recommends the hiring of additional qualified support staff.

CFR 2.14: Appropriate information to, and treatment of, transfer students

Ten percent of UDLA's student population has transferred in from other programs. Four years ago there was an influx of transfer students due to the government's closure of several Ecuadorian universities. The SS states that the number of transfer students has reduced recently, but during the visit the team learned that the staff does not believe this source of transfer students will continue for long. UDLA's competitive pricing and reputation for improving quality of education is projected to lead to an increase of transfer students in the future. The process of accepting a transfer student is well structured; the content of potential transfer courses, upon evaluation, must be deemed 80% similar to those offered at UDLA before transfer credit will be given. In certain cases, students also need to take an

exam to show equivalency in knowledge before the credit is given. Ecuadorian law dictates that there is no limit to the number of credits that can be transferred between universities; however, after the ERC recommended re-evaluation of the transfer policy, the Higher Council approved a limit of 50%.

Standard Three: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

The institution sustains its operations and supports the achievement of its educational objectives through investments in human, physical, fiscal, technological, and information resources and through an appropriate and effective set of organizational and decision-making structures. These key resources and organizational structures promote the achievement of institutional purposes and educational objectives and create a high-quality environment for learning.

CFR 3.1: Sufficient, qualified, and diverse faculty and staff to support programs and operations

UDLA employs 915 total faculty and 225 total instructors (see “The Report on Current Faculty and Future Staffing Plans,” page 1), with an additional 646 academic administrative personnel. Of the total faculty 625 are full-time and 290 are part-time. UDLA plans to increase the number of full-time faculty by 8% each year as per its strategic plan. The faculty is diverse in the context of Ecuador, and roughly representative of the student population in terms of ethnicity and gender (see discussion of CFR 1.4, page 12).

As part of UDLA’s institutional improvement plan since pursuing WSCUC accreditation, approximately \$7.7 Million was allocated toward the development and recruitment of more full-time faculty, preferably with terminal degrees. The team commends the significant progress UDLA has made in transitioning from a majority part-time adjunct faculty to a majority full-time faculty; from 396 in 2013 to 778 (faculty and instructor level) by the time of the visit in October of 2015. The team though echoes the concern expressed by the ERC about the continued low percentage of university faculty with advanced degrees. The team acknowledges the challenges posed by the fact that nationwide Ecuador has a low number of available PhD’s to staff the needs of the country’s universities. Still, the current reported level of 7% of all faculty holding an earned academic doctoral degree, while more than double the level of 3% only two years ago, is still far too low to support the kind of elite university culture to

which UDLA aspires. The increase of faculty with a master's degree (from 50% in 2013 to 84% in 2015) is much more encouraging, and may provide a basis for expecting more progress at the doctoral level in the future.

The team did learn that UDLA's academic leadership has made an intentional decision to accept slower rates of increase in faculty terminal degrees in order to preserve the unique institutional culture and avoid flooding the faculty with outsiders (from outside UDLA and, most likely, outside Ecuador) with doctoral degrees. Instead, UDLA is providing support for a significant number of current faculty to earn the doctoral degree, a choice that will bear fruit over the next two to three years. The team was told that 178 UDLA faculty are currently pursuing masters degrees and 91 are pursuing doctorates. The team was persuaded of the wisdom of the academic administration's strategy of maintaining its institutional culture, but strongly recommends that the institution demonstrate its awareness of the critical nature of this challenge by making this a top priority, and taking steps to make significant progress in the short term. UDLA does have sufficient faculty to oversee their undergraduate programs, but its graduate and research programs are in critical need of additional doctoral-level faculty.

Toward this end, the team does note with encouragement that the university has allocated an additional \$1.5M for FY 16 and has indicated in their budget plans to continue their efforts in recruiting faculty with terminal degrees or supporting faculty members as they seek to obtain a terminal degree. All new faculty hires (with the exception of culinary arts and music) are now required to hold at least a masters degree and, since the "grow our own" strategy will take some time, they are prioritizing hiring more PhDs in the short term. The team encourages UDLA to establish clear priorities for which areas are most in need of increased PhD-prepared faculty, and target these areas first.

While the category of technical teacher is appropriate in such fields as gastronomy and music, UDLA could benefit from developing a set of criteria for determining what constitutes proper qualifications in

those areas (e.g., years of experience, notability in the field, etc.), as guidelines for establishing the minimum qualifications for new hires.

CFR 3.2: Faculty and staff policies, practices and evaluation well developed and applied

UDLA has developed a robust and impressive faculty evaluation process that includes multiple data points and could serve as a model for other institutions in Latin America, as well as for WSCUC. The faculty evaluation involves multiple sources of feedback including faculty self-evaluations, peer review, course evaluation, and supervisor evaluation. Through this process, faculty can provide their own assessment of strengths, weaknesses, and areas of growth. In addition, through peer review, each faculty member evaluates, provides suggestions, and learns from other faculty. In the team meeting with the faculty, where there were over 200 full and part-time faculty present, the faculty spoke highly of the value of the evaluation system instituted in recent years. Several indicated how they learned new course strategy and pedagogical approaches from their colleagues that helped them become better teachers. These evaluations were supplemented with course evaluations from the students, which included the student's assessment of how well the objectives of the course were met. In addition, the directors and deans also evaluate the faculty. Faculty with high rankings (8 out of 10 or higher) were recognized and given a letter of commendation by the dean. Others were given the necessary resources and development opportunities for improvement in the areas of weakness, such as pedagogical training. General areas of concern or trends are noted in the annual Dean's report, which is shared with administrative bodies and leadership to review and, when necessary, allocate resources for any needed training. In addition, new hires receive orientation and required training in such areas as pedagogy, policy, and university culture. A set of required workshops addresses topics such as Student Learning Assessment and curricular development. The university tracks faculty participation in the different workshops, as well as in more advance workshops offered by the university.

The institution should be commended on their faculty evaluation processes, the resources allocated to ensure that faculty members receive training for continual improvement, and the use of multiple sources of data. In addition, the team encourages the Commission to consider inviting the institution to make a presentation on their evaluation process at one of the WSCUC annual meetings.

CFR 3.3 Faculty and staff development planned, implemented, and evaluated

The team found an impressive set of programs available for faculty development at UDLA. First, the institution provides a number of workshops for the faculty on a variety of topics including pedagogy, student learning outcomes, curricular development, and specific discipline-related areas. Basic workshops are required, while others are voluntary depending on faculty and department interest. In reviewing the data on participation, the team found that faculty from all of the departments attended the required sessions. For the more advanced areas some departments had more participation than others. A more systematic analysis of the relationship of workshop attendance to teaching effectiveness might help UDLA develop strategies to improve this promising program.

The institution has also developed a support structure to increase faculty professional development, including support for publishing, research, and pursuit of advance degrees. For instance, since UDLA is primarily a teaching university, only recently developing strength in research areas, many faculty members were inexperienced in both research and publication. To strengthen these areas, UDLA has assisted faculty with developing research strategies, preparing grant proposals, writing academic papers for publication, developing their own scholarly journal, and preparing applications for doctoral programs. This process has increased faculty involvement in publications and research.

In interviews with the faculty the team learned that they appreciate the faculty development improvements that have been taken so far, but believe it is still limited in important ways. For example, faculty reported that release time for pursuing advance degrees is insufficient and must be made up upon return. Also, faculty often need to find their own funding to attend conferences, and there is

limited release time for research. The team suggests that UDLA consider establishing an annual fund for faculty development and research. The distribution of these funds can be allocated through a process controlled by a faculty committee, such as the submission of proposals for research leaves, sabbaticals and participation in conferences, which can be evaluated and awarded equitably through peer review.

CFR 3.4 - Financial stability, clean audits, sufficient resources; realistic plans for any deficits; integrated budgeting; enrollment management; diversified revenue sources

The financial information submitted by UDLA, and confirmed and explored by the team during the visit in meetings with the CFO and other financial administrators and staff, shows a strong balance sheet that allows the institution to cover normal operational expenses as well as to fund quality enhancement and continued development. Operational results are solid and, to date, most University surpluses have been reinvested in the institution. This includes UDLA's significant campus expansion, and investment in IT and information systems. As noted previously, UDLA's financial commitment also includes a serious effort to increase full-time faculty with doctoral degrees.

In keeping with WSCUC requirements, UDLA has used Price Waterhouse Coopers of Ecuador to audit financial statements in US GAAP for 2013 and 2014, receiving an unqualified opinion for both years. The University also continues to use International Financial Reporting Standards, as is mandatory in Ecuador.

The team found that careful planning, coupled with prudent financial management, have led to a strong foundation upon which the University has developed a long range plan (UDLA 2015-2019). This plan, along with UDLA annual updates (Plan Operativo Annual or POA) allows the use of long term commitments as a point of reference that are reviewed and adjusted as necessary, thereby maintaining institutional direction. The long range plan key financial indicators assume an enrolment growth that will be capped at 25,000 by the year 2020, supporting close to 200 faculty with doctoral degrees with an additional commitment of over \$23 million dollars from 2017 to 2020, doubling academic facilities at the UDLAPark Campus, and continued investment in the library, laboratories, equipment, and IT support and systems.

The budgeting process is designed to promote the participation of key academic and administrative areas; it begins in July, schedules budget planning meetings within all major areas in August, includes reviews by the CFO, CAO and Director of Operations in September, and is all brought together for institutional approval in October.

As the University continues to grow and mature, it will be increasingly important to give some thought to diversifying its sources of income. Eventually, a concerted effort focusing on alumni who might be supportive, general fundraising, reaching out to corporations for gifts and contracts, and an increased emphasis on funded faculty research might be helpful.

CFR 3.5: Facilities, services, information and technology resources sufficient and aligned with objective

The team found that UDLA has an overall strong commitment to Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources as can be observed by its current and planned buildings, technology, systems, and information resources. The University has modern and functional facilities to support its academic programs across the four campuses. Three of the campuses are owned by Servicios Profesionales AD Portas (a real estate development company formed by Laureate universities in Chile where UDLA is a minority shareholder) and on long term lease to UDLA with an option to buy and right of first refusal. The fourth (the Colón Campus) is wholly owned by UDLA. The planned expansion of the UDLAPark Campus will be entirely funded and owned by UDLA.

Classroom spaces are comfortable and appropriate to teaching and learning requirements, and laboratories are well ordered and equipped. Of particular distinction are the top-notch facilities for UDLA's Culinary Arts programs.

UDLA has focused on and made considerable investment in IT and systems to ensure student learning and fulfill its core academic mission, as well as to support the day-to-day operations of the institution. As part of its self-study, the University reviewed and updated its policies on inventory, use, and replacement of equipment, as well as relevant software supporting academic programs. In March

2014, UDLA began migrating from a legacy system to PeopleSoft, seeking a better and more integrated enterprise resource planning (ERP) system. UDLA uses Banner (Ellucian) for student information systems, Moodle for course delivery, and Symphony as the library management system.

UDLA has invested heavily in library holdings, both in its book collection as well as electronic databases, and anticipates increasing its investment as part of UDLA 2015-2019. Since its ERC letter, UDLA has made substantial improvements in the library, investing over \$500,000 in 2014 and close to \$600,000 in 2015, increasing library holdings from 19,000 to 24,540, and expanding the number of databases to 34. Central to enhancements in this arena is the modern Carlos Larreátegui Library that is part of the new facilities at the UDLAPark Campus. The team was impressed with these enhancements to the library function; however, the team does recommend that UDLA find ways to provide additional space for individual and group study to adequately support its increased and still growing student population.

CFR 3.6: Leadership operates with integrity, high performance, responsibility, and accountability

The team found that UDLA's leadership is committed to transparency and accountability. The institution has adopted a Code of Conduct and Ethics that stipulates that all employees must accept their responsibility to promote integrity and ethical conduct in all activities. According to the SS, further evidence of its commitment to high performance and accountability is demonstrated by the implementation of the Laureate system's performance review process, which places great emphasis on high performance and accountability.

The ERC identified the lack of a formal review process for the Rector, a function of the legally mandated absence of an independent governing board, to be a significant weakness. In their SS, UDLA reported that, while the Rector already submits an annual report to the Higher Council for approval and then disseminates it to the entire university community, an evaluation process for the Rector would be designed and carried out by the recently appointed Advisory Board. The team found that progress has

been made on developing the process, but it still has not yet been implemented (see also CFR 3.9). In accordance with Ecuadorian law, the Rector and Vice-Rector are elected by the entire university community, and the bylaws include specific provisions for elections and for any referendum regarding performance.

CFR 3.7: Clear, consistent decision-making structures and processes; priority to sustain institutional capacity and educational effectiveness

UDLA is organized in three areas with clear lines of reporting: academic administration, institutional operations, and planning. The team learned of no problems or complaints in this area. The Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs oversees the academic administration of the university: all deans and heads of academic programs and services report to him. The Director of Operations has management responsibility for Finance, Human Resources, Information Systems, Marketing, Admissions, and Facilities Management while the Director of Planning and Development has responsibility for the areas of Information Intelligence, Community Involvement, and Strategic Planning.

CFR 3.8: Full-time CEO and full-time CFO; sufficient qualified administrator

The team concurs with the finding of the ERC that the administrative structure is strong at every level: the institution has a complement of full-time administrators (CEO, CAO and CFO) backed up by a robust staff.

CFR 3.9: Independent governing board with appropriate oversight, including hiring and evaluating CEO

UDLA does not have an independent governing body of the kind that is typically found in domestic institutions. Instead, as required by the Higher Education Law passed in Ecuador in 2010, its highest decision-making body is exclusively internal. This body is referred to as the “Consejo Superior” or Higher Council, and is comprised of representatives of the faculty (single largest block), administration, students, alumni, and staff. During the eligibility process, the ERC pointed out the need for UDLA to more closely meet WSCUC’s policy on independent governing boards. After consultation with Ecuadorian higher education agencies and internal reflection, UDLA has developed and implemented

what the team has found to be a creative solution designed to satisfy the spirit of WSCUC expectations for independent governance while continuing to follow its national laws. UDLA revised its bylaws to establish an external body called the Advisory Board (“Consejo Consultivo”) that will serve as “an external and independent organ for consultation and advising” (SS, page 84). The Advisory Board is comprised of prominent representatives from Ecuadorean industry, education, and government; its first chair is a former President of Ecuador. The team learned during its interviews with administration, the Higher Council, the Advisory Board and review of appropriate documentation (minutes and bylaws) that this Board has now met several times already, elected its officials, approved its bylaws, adopted a conflict of interest policy, selected its representatives to committees (Planning, Finance and Budget, Audit, and Academic Affairs) and began to discuss possible approaches to the evaluation of the Rector which is scheduled to be conducted in March 2016. While much will depend on how this process works in practice over the next several years, the team sees this as a potential example of a best practice that could be adapted elsewhere under similar circumstances.

CFR 3.10: Effective academic leadership by faculty

UDLA has adopted policies that clearly outline the roles, rights, and responsibilities of all categories of full-time and part-time faculty. The institution’s faculty participate in institutional governance through the Higher Council where they hold the majority of the seats. They also serve on committees and task forces at the program and college levels.

During the visit, the team met with faculty representatives on the Higher Council and with a very large number of faculty members during an open meeting. On both occasions, faculty members repeatedly stated that they enjoyed academic freedom and had many opportunities to participate in institutional governance.

STANDARD 4**Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement**

The institution engages in sustained, evidence-based, and participatory self-reflection about how effectively it is accomplishing its purposes and achieving its educational objectives. The institution considers the changing environment of higher education in envisioning its future.

inform both institutional planning and systematic evaluations of educational effectiveness. The results of institutional inquiry, research, and data collection are used to establish priorities, to plan, and to improve quality and effectiveness.

CFR 4.1: Quality-assurance processes in place to collect, analyze, and interpret data; track results over time; use comparative data; and make improvements

As noted previously, the team found that UDLA has gone a long way towards creating a real culture of evidence in its community. They now have in place the infrastructure to systematically collect and analyze important quality assurance data. Program review processes based on mechanisms used to support programmatic accreditation in a variety of areas have been refined and adapted to all degree programs, and UDLA is poised to begin full implementation. UDLA recognizes its need to now apply these same kinds of procedures to the non-academic departments. The team found some evidence of improvements that have already been made based on institutional self-assessment (e.g. development and implementation of an early warning system to identify at-risk students and provide them with academic support). However, the team did find that UDLA still needs to further develop its institutional capacity and systems for careful reflection on what the evidence they are now collecting means, in part through more comparative and contextual data, in part through more widespread institutional conversations about the meaning of its data and implications for improvements.

CFR 4.2: Sufficient institutional research (IR) capacity; data disseminated and incorporated in planning and decision-making; IR effectiveness assessed

The team was impressed that UDLA has significantly enhanced its IR (“Information Intelligence” as they refer to it) capacity in recent years, now employing four full-time data analysts, up from one. They also have dashboards that function as a tracking system that allows monitoring of key indicators, and are able to produce IPEDS-type reports. They have begun to assess the effectiveness of their own IR

function, asking users for feedback and suggestions for improvement, but have not yet begun formal, systematic and objective assessment. UDLA appears to have made real progress in this area.

CFR 4.3: Commitment to improvement based on data and evidence; systematic assessment of teaching, learning, campus environment; utilization of results

In recent years, UDLA has instituted a number of measures to improve teaching and learning. To ensure that faculty develop and use learning outcomes, the university created a number of training programs as noted in the discussion of CFR 3.2. All faculty members are expected to include Student Learning Outcomes in the syllabi, which are reviewed through a regular sampling process. The team is concerned that, while not all programs responded in a timely manner to its request for syllabi, the limited number of syllabi reviewed indicated mixed compliance with these expectations. UDLA could benefit from assigning additional personnel to the review process and using a central depository of syllabi from which to draw random samples. In addition, it could benefit from correlating the proper use of SLOs in syllabi to participation in the training program to assess the effectiveness of the training in developing improved SLOs.

UDLA's Employability Study also provides the university with an excellent source of data on how well each degree program provides the necessary skills and competencies to prepare students for future employment. This type of study demonstrates UDLA's commitment to implementing best-practices that ensure students are employable and well equipped to succeed in their chosen field. Through this study, UDLA is able to identify how long it takes for their graduates to obtain employment in their field, how well graduates perceive their preparation for their chosen profession, and the graduates' job performance as assessed by their managers. The departments evaluate the data from the study to determine the effectiveness of their curriculum in preparing students for employment in their chosen field. This data is used to adjust the curriculum and implement changes. For instance, faculty noted that in psychology students entering the profession expressed a need for particular skills in interventions, which were then incorporated into future courses.

UDLA could benefit from a high-level review and coordination of learning assessment at a broader institutional context, particularly to correlate broader programmatic trends beyond the Dean's Reports, interpret the data, and provide guidance to the departments.

CFR 4.4: Ongoing inquiry into teaching and learning to improve curricula, pedagogy, and assessment

In reviewing a sample of documents, including the Dean Reports, Employability Study, Faculty Evaluations, and various surveys, the team found ample evidence that UDLA has developed and implemented the appropriate rubrics, measures, and analysis of teaching and learning. When programs identify deficiencies, recommended actions are noted and UDLA takes the necessary steps to improve curricula and programming, including the allocation of resources.

The university monitors multiple sets of data, which include grades, persistence, and graduation rates. The Dean's Report provides the richest source of data, including data on teaching effectiveness and recommendations for improvement. In addition, it includes multiple data points on students, as well as issues related to student learning and recommendations for improvement when appropriate. These reports are collected by academic affairs and shared with the appropriate decision makers. In interviews with faculty members, the team learned that reports are the primary tool for collecting and disseminating data on teaching and learning, as well as the vehicle for making appropriate recommendations for improvements. Recently, UDLA also developed a dashboard to ensure that key persons, including the programs, can access and monitor the relevant data.

CFR 4.5: Appropriate stakeholders involved in regular assessment of institutional effectiveness

The instruments described in the previous discussion of CFR 4.4 incorporate stakeholders in assessment and in some instances, such as the Employability Study, include a set of metrics many institutions lack. In addition, UDLA uses various instruments, such as satisfaction surveys to assess the effectiveness of institutional services to the students. Through these multiple vehicles, UDLA includes the perspectives and feedback of its many stakeholders. At the department level, faculty participate in

committees that both provide feedback and offer recommendations. Deans and other leadership representatives are also involved in reviewing information including assessment outcomes, and offering recommendations. Finally, the Higher Council includes representatives from faculty, administration, and leadership, which provides an opportunity for a variety of stakeholders to participate in the review of data and make decisions regarding recommendations for improvement. In interviewing faculty, students, and alumni, the team found that most reported opportunities for their participation in providing feedback and assessing institutional effectiveness. In addition, most indicated that the administration is responsive in addressing concerns raised by the stakeholders and demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement.

CFR 4.6: Reflection and planning with multiple constituents; strategic plans align with purposes; address key priorities and future directions; plans are monitored and revised as required

UDLA has a strategic plan built upon a detailed SWOT analysis that is aligned with its purposes and addresses key priorities. It has measurable outcomes and timelines. In interviews with the faculty, administrators, and leadership, it was evident to the team that there was ample participation in the development of the strategic plan from multiple constituencies and stakeholders. To develop the strategic plan, UDLA created a planning committee and brought outside facilitators and consultants that assisted the university in outlining an inclusive planning document, identifying various stakeholders, and establishing workgroups. The Planning Committee included two deans and two directors assigned to create workgroups with the faculty. In addition, UDLA utilized various focus groups and included students and alumni in the workgroups. Through this process they developed five objectives and strategies for achieving the objectives. The strategic plan was shared with the various constituencies and their feedback was incorporated into the final product.

Upon completion of the plan, UDLA held a series of meetings to establish action plans to reach the goal and develop operational plans. Through the various interviews conducted during the visit, different constituencies indicated either direct participation in the planning process or opportunity to provide

feedback in the development of the plan. The strategic plan was aligned with the mission and objectives of the institution, provided clear measurable goals and objectives, with appropriate timelines, prioritization, and assignment of responsibilities. Key performance indicators were incorporated into the operational plan and reviewed by the appropriate individuals. Each department's goals, strategies, and operational plans are aligned to the institutional strategic plan. The Dean's Report notes annual goals, aligned to the plan, and documents the progress made in achieving the goals. The institutional budget reflects funding allocated to priorities identified by the strategic plan and funding requests are sent through each department, aligned to specific objectives.

Given that UDLA's strategic plan was only recently implemented, data on the effectiveness of the plan is limited at the present time. While documentation indicates that the plan is progressing accordingly, it is important that UDLA continues to monitor and assess progress to ensure ongoing success. In addition, UDLA should develop and implement a process for assessing the effectiveness of the planning process, the plan, and the implementation of the plan to note possible areas of improvement that will assist them in future planning.

CFR 4.7: Anticipating and responding to a changing higher educational environment

The SWOT analysis used for the strategic plan indicates that the institution is anticipating and responding to changes in the higher education environment in Ecuador as well as internationally. In addition, UDLA has analyzed and developed strategies in response to the national "living well" document, prepared by the government and noting salient issues and trends in the country. Further, the faculty and administration take advantage of the various networks (redes), where professionals in their particular fields and higher education throughout South America address issues related to opportunities, trends, and threats. Based on these collegial conversations, UDLA develops benchmarks for best practices and responds to the ever-changing higher education environment. In some respects, by seeking WSCUC accreditation, UDLA has not only demonstrated their commitment to keeping informed

and responding to changes in higher educations, but also has taken a leadership role in Ecuador's higher education community.

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

A. Degrees Programs: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees:

The self-study and related evidence reviewed by the team during its visit indicate that UDLA is well positioned to continue ongoing institutional self-learning and will be prepared for the next stages in accreditation. It has defined the degrees it offers in terms of expectations for learning, and evidence reviewed by the teams indicates that the expected outcomes are appropriate. All programs have developed learning outcomes, and the institution anticipates meeting the current April 2016 deadline for submittal of proposals to CES (the Ecuadorian regulatory agency for higher education) for review and approval. Program learning outcomes align with institutional learning outcomes and in turn are developed through sequential course learning outcomes that are listed in all syllabi. The outcomes serve as the basis for assessment and program evaluation.

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

Through its various assessment processes, UDLA has documented that its academic programs ensure the development of core competencies including written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking. UDLA regularly analyzes the evidence related to these competencies, reports on student achievement of its learning outcomes, contextualizes the findings according to the mission and priorities of the institution, and formulates its own plans for improvement. Regular program review, as well as the various accreditation processes in which UDLA is engaged (WASC, CEAACES, accreditation in Chile of select UDLA programs), plays an integral role in preparing UDLA to continue to learn and improve as a learning community.

C. Sustainability: Preparing for the Changing Higher Education Environment

The institution shows evidence of being a learning organization through thoughtful processes of planning for the future. The addition of its external Advisory Board to its internal Higher Council gives it considerable resources in identifying and adjusting to its rapidly changing educational context. The team learned that UDLA's administrative team has excelled in adapting to multiple prior changes, and has found opportunity in addressing its nation's needs following the closing of several institutions of higher learning, and using its commitment to seek and qualify for international accreditation to strengthen its position with its government.

The University evidences its awareness of these challenges and is engaged in taking proactive steps to meet them. The strategic plan UDLA 2020 is designed to lead the University in the right direction. In addition to continuing to offer programs that are relevant to the student population served by UDLA, the institution intends to increase enrolment to 25,000 by the year 2020. Accompanying this important growth is UDLA's commitment to and investment in quality, as there are financial provisions for 200 full-time professors to be hired and/or complete their degrees, and integrating research as part of the substantive functions of the university expansion of campus facilities.

SECTION IV. INVENTORY OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS INDICATORS

UDLA did provide the team with a completed IEEI. Most of this was well done, and indicated that UDLA was in compliance with the relevant expectations. Some of the programs have not yet gone through program review, as is to be expected with a process that is still relatively new, but all of these have been scheduled and, based on the successful experience of others, should be completed in a timely fashion. The description of how the various findings are used is still a bit vague, consistent with other findings the team made that UDLA's processes for systematic, institutional interpretation and reflection upon that impressive array of data it is now collecting can be enhanced. It is expected this will happen as the relatively new processes have time to mature. As noted elsewhere in the team report, the team is

concerned that student success data, including key indicators like retention and graduation rates, are still not being published in an accessible way to the general public. While the team understands the challenges UDLA faces in this area, the team does strongly recommend that this weakness be addressed as soon as possible.

SECTION V. FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**Team Commendations:**

The Team:

1. Recognizes and appreciates the commitment and efforts of the Rector of UDLA and his leadership team, as well as the faculty, staff, students, administration, who have collectively brought UDLA to its present level of quality and standing in the higher education community of Ecuador through the WSCUC accreditation process. The University is commended for its excellent Self Study Report and also for its passionate participation in all aspects of the review process. The team particularly recognizes the excellent work of the ALO and her talented and dedicated team. (CFR 1.8, 3.6)
2. Congratulates UDLA for the clarity of its mission statement and its commitment to the development of a student-centered model of education, as evidenced in team meetings with a wide range of university constituents, in particular a remarkable session with a very impressive and articulate sample of students. (CFR 1.1)
3. Acknowledges the impressive progress of UDLA in developing a culture of evidence that embraces the assessment of student outcomes at the course, program, and institutional levels; establishing the institutional research and strategic planning infrastructure necessary to support data collection; and a robust and exemplary faculty evaluation model that could serve as a model in Ecuador and potentially throughout the WSCUC region. (CFR 2.3-7, 4.1-4.3)
4. Commends UDLA's comprehensive planning process and detailed strategic plan for 2015-2019. The plan has priorities and objectives that should provide a roadmap for the next 5 years, financial commitments in support of the plan's priorities, indicators by which the institution can measure its progress, and the Annual Operational Plan through which UDLA can make the necessary adjustments while maintaining the long term institutional direction. Of particular

importance are the financial commitments and investments in full-time faculty, faculty with doctoral degrees, the development of research centers, and modern and functional facilities.

(CFR 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 4.6)

5. Applauds UDLA's commitment to ensuring a diverse learning community as evidenced by a higher representation of minority ethnic groups (38%) than the national average (10%) among full-time faculty and a broad geographical draw of students (40% from Quito and 60% from the provinces). (CFR 1.4)
6. Recognizes UDLA for the pursuit and achievement of program accreditation beyond Ecuador, as reflected by the achievement of accreditation in Chile of UDLA's programs in Law, Computer Systems Engineering, Marketing, International Business, Commercial Engineering with an emphasis in Business Administration, and Commercial Engineering with an emphasis in Finance. This illustrates the University's commitment to excellence and its vision of internationalism in education.
7. Congratulates UDLA's creation of an Advisory Board that goes beyond what is customary in Ecuador and integrates a select and distinctive group of high profile national leaders and accomplished professionals from government, business, and academia, including a former President of Ecuador. UDLA's innovative initiative creatively captures the spirit of WSCUC's policy on independent governing boards while being respectful of the prevailing higher education policy in Ecuador. (CFR 3.9)
8. Acknowledges and applauds the important national contribution the UDLA community and leadership is making by developing a leading university that is committed to innovation, critical thought and independence of higher education in Ecuador.

Team Recommendations:

1. Although institutional data is generally not made public by Ecuadorean higher education universities, in the interest of the principle of transparency espoused by WSCUC, UDLA should publish student achievement data, including retention and graduation rates, on its website along with the relevant and necessary contextual background information. (CFR 1.2)
2. While UDLA has made significant progress in the development of policies and practices in the area of assessment, the institution should continue to collect evidence of student learning outcomes so that it demonstrates that over time its graduates consistently achieve its stated learning outcomes and established standards of performance. (CFR 2.6)
3. UDLA has made great strides in program review, completing a select number of programs. The institution should continue moving forward with this process by setting up a specific timeline to complete the review of all academic and non-academic programs. (CFR 2.7)
4. Central to UDLA's strategic plan 2015-2019 and its aspirations for becoming an elite international university is the number of full-time faculty with doctoral degrees. UDLA should continue investing in more full-time faculty, supporting faculty in the pursuit of doctoral degrees, hiring more new faculty with doctoral degrees, and establish specific goals and timetables. It is particularly important for UDLA to develop a strategy that identifies and prioritizes the areas in which doctoral degrees are most important, especially those areas involved in supporting active research laboratories. (CFR 2.1, 3.1)
5. UDLA has recently expanded the spectrum of services and staff needed to support student services. However, the pace of this expansion has not kept up with the growth and needs of the student population. UDLA should continue to increase the number of service and support staff in areas like the Counseling Center to ensure that all current and future students are adequately served. (CFR 2.13)

6. UDLA has invested heavily in library holdings, both in its book collection as well as electronic databases, and anticipates increasing its investment as part of UDLA 2015-2019. Convergent with the large current and future student population, as well as the transformation of the library into an environment where students not only access and process information but also work independently and in teams, UDLA should make provisions for additional space for individual and group study. (CFR 3.5)
7. Through multiple instruments and approaches such as the employability study, the student satisfaction survey, and the use of rubrics to examine learning measures to name a few, UDLA has shown its commitment to improvement based on data and evidence. Exemplary among these efforts is the evaluation of teaching. In order to close the loop and perfect what is already being done, UDLA should conduct an assessment of the process as such. (CFR 4.3)
8. UDLA has made a laudable effort in strengthening its institutional research capacity, both in the staff supporting the generation of data as well as the wide variety of data available to all the university community. Nevertheless, the institution should strengthen the staff required for data analysis especially from the perspective of the broader institutional context. (CFR 4.2, 4.5, 4.6)