

**REPORT OF THE WSCUC VISITING TEAM**  
**SPECIAL VISIT for INITIAL ACCREDITATION**

**Claremont Lincoln University**

December 3-5, 2014

**Team Roster**

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The team evaluated the institution under the 2013 WASC Senior College and University Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission.

The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WASC website.



## SECTION I. OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

Claremont Lincoln University (CLU) was founded as a graduate university in May 2011 in partnership with Claremont School of Theology and with advisement from a host of faith-based institutions representing various religious affiliations: Protestant Christian, Islam, Jewish, and Hindu. An extremely generous founding gift launched Claremont Lincoln University into existence. As efforts to offer graduate education developed, CLU determined to become an independent graduate university, offering innovative programs of study that would develop student capacities for compassionate leadership across social sectors.

Claremont Lincoln University's mission states:

*Claremont Lincoln is a graduate university that provides innovative educational offerings with a global imperative. Students will develop capacities for compassionate leadership across social sectors. In an interconnected age, these individuals will engage in dialogue and collaboration across cultural, ideological, religious and economic perspectives. We achieve our mission with three areas of advanced inquiry and practice: ethical leadership, interfaith action, and social impact. Our students will integrate self-knowledge with critical perspectives and contemporary skills to create sustainable social change.*

CLU attempts to achieve this robust mission through three Masters Degree Programs, all offered online only:

Masters in Ethical Leadership

Masters in Interfaith Action

Masters in Social Impact

These programs are interdisciplinary in nature and are all foundationally grounded in the Claremont Core™:

Mindfulness

Dialogue

Collaboration

Change

This core represents the basic building blocks of educational attainment that is embodied in four courses that are required of each student regardless their degree program. Each student completes the core course requirements concurrent with the courses in their specific degree program.

### **Accreditation History**

During the first two years of its existence, CLU was incubated at Claremont School of Theology, offering a degree program in Ethical Leadership. In July 2013, CLU was granted candidacy for accreditation by WSCUC following an initial visit in Spring 2013. Approval was granted in August 2014 by the Substantive Change Committee Team for the Interfaith Action and Social Impact degree programs. The Team determined that the Ethical Leadership degree program was previously approved through the affiliation with Claremont School of Theology.

In its letter to CST/CLU leadership dated July 10, 2013, the Commission emphasized four critical areas for attention:

1. **Financial Sustainability:** Claremont Lincoln University was encouraged to develop a more comprehensive business plan to ensure financial stability and sustainability as enrollments grew and the initial gift was spent.
2. **Board of Trustees:** CLU was encouraged to expand its Board to include members not coming from partner institutions in order for the Board to carry out its fiduciary responsibilities and other duties more effectively. Included was the direction to form Board Committees.
3. **Educational Effectiveness:** CLU was encouraged to align Institutional Learning Outcomes, Program Learning Outcomes and Student Learning Outcomes. In addition, CLU was to document a robust assessment process and to collect, analyze and disseminate evidence of educational effectiveness.
4. **Data Management:** CLU was encouraged to develop a centralized data management system along with a plan for data collection and analyses.

### **Quality of the Special Visit Report and Supporting Evidence**

The Visiting Team found the institutional narrative report to be complete, engaging, and informative. The report contained all the necessary elements as required by the Standards. It was clear to the Team during the visit, that a host of members from the Claremont Lincoln University community were involved and engaged in the process of writing and refining the report. Appropriate evidence was provided including exhibits in support of the self-study, WSCUC required exhibits and additional documents requested. The Team is grateful for the responsiveness of every member of the CLU community in supplying supportive documents during the visit.

Of special note is the engagement of faculty and external experts in developing and refining academic programs at Claremont Lincoln University. The use of "Curriculum Labs" will be discussed later in this document, but the Team was broadly impressed with this method to create innovative interdisciplinary programs and further supports the notion that this could be a model that would benefit other educators in creating new academic programs.

The Team took into account that not many people have graduated from CLU degree programs. In fact, the only graduates to date technically came under the CST umbrella. Thus, data on graduates does not yet exist. However, the institution has robust plans in place to collect, analyze and utilize data on graduates when that event occurs. In addition, CLU has created an Institutional Research Office and engaged a highly competent professional to lead and manage the centralized data system. Regular data reports are filtered throughout the Academic Leadership Team, and appear to be utilized to inform and improve institutional effectiveness. Obviously a longer track record of data collection and utilization will need to occur as the institution grows and matures.

### **Description of the Team Review Process**

The Team followed standard protocols for conducting the visit. Each member of the Team was assigned specific elements of the Standards and Criteria For

Review (CFR) allowing individuals to focus attention on institutional elements. A conference call was conducted prior to the site visit to establish basic lines of inquiry and team members began to prepare observations of institutional compliance and effectiveness based upon the documents provided.

During the visit Team members interviewed various groups and individuals in accordance with their assignments. Additional documentation was requested as needed. The Team was extremely grateful for the responsiveness of all members of the CLU community including Board Members, leaders, faculty, students and staff. On several occasions, CLU utilized their excellent technical capabilities to engage members of their community who lived great distances from the campus, to participate in the site visit. The Team found CLU to be highly professional and warmly friendly in all interactions.

## **SECTION II. EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH WSCUC'S STANDARDS**

### **Standard I: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives**

The CLU mission statement is well developed, clear, and substantive in its message. It makes clear that CLU is committed to “developing capacities for compassionate leadership across social sectors.” It also is clear that the three areas of focus for the curriculum are ethical leadership, interfaith action, and social impact. The core curriculum, required of all students, provides foundational courses in the areas of Mindfulness, Dialogue, Collaboration, and Change Leadership. These courses are substantive and thorough and offer a most creative and interactive way for students to engage the issues of the CLU curriculum. This mission displays an integrative approach that seeks to bring together the world of ideas and their practical applications.

The outcomes desired at CLU in its graduates are clearly stated and there is clarity about the programs that will develop these outcomes. The overarching vision of CLU is “to bring about harmony in all levels and arenas of social interaction and organization.” There is a consistency and alignment between the stated purposes and programs and curriculum at CLU. CLU has brought together in its offerings commitments to both theory and practice. It does an exceptional job of integrating these two perspectives. There is a widely shared consensus at CLU about what it intends to do and how it intends to do so.

The team was impressed with the way that the leadership of CLU was able to respond to one of the core challenges raised by the accreditation team: articulating with greater precision and concreteness the identity of the school. What kind of university/school does CLU want to be? Is it primarily a graduate academic institution, a professional school, a school for training practitioners? What are the academic and disciplinary anchors for the school that confer its context and identity? It is clear that CLU is interdisciplinary and incorporates several areas of investigation in its work, but there is a need to explicate more clearly what CLU is to the various audiences and publics to which it relates. The skills and capacities which are the focus of the CLU programs are sometimes referred to as the “soft skills” which are necessary for leadership in our world to

create harmony today. How can CLU best define what kind of school it seeks to be? CLU clearly wants to be a leader for a new model of graduate education. It needs to and has the opportunity to be more precise in its mission and goals to achieve this.

Some questions that CLU must answer: What publics does it wish to serve? Are there “anchoring” disciplines that define the school? Are its desired products (graduates profiles) sufficiently clear and concrete? What will the placement opportunities be for CLU graduates?

The Visiting Team was impressed with the understandings that the CLU leadership (Board, Administration, faculty, and staff) articulated on the issues of institutional identity during the Team visit. The Team encouraged CLU to be more explicit in sharing these understandings more widely in its messaging.

CLU does superb work in measuring and assessing the ongoing work of its students to see that it is aligned with stated institutional purposes. It uses updated, state of the art tools and techniques for generating the data it needs for these purposes. The data and assessment are updated on an ongoing basis.

(CFR 1.1 and 1.2)

The institution operates within a framework of integrity and transparency. The Visiting Team found this commitment demonstrated through clear communication with its constituencies through its website, publications and policies.

The University has publicly stated its commitment to academic freedom in a number of places: 1) *Memorandum of Understanding Among Parties Collaborating in the Claremont University Project*; 2) the Faculty Bylaws, chapter 9.2; 3) the *Catalog*, as well as each of the *Claremont Lincoln University Degree Program Handbooks*; 4) *Policy on Student Judicial Process*. These policy pronouncements appear to conform to the AAUP’s statements on academic freedom, and CFR 1.3. These pronouncements are integral to the multi-faith environment that CLU has sought to establish. Faculty members with whom the team engaged believe that the actions by the institutional leadership conform with and are supportive of the institutional policies (CFR 1.3).

Diversity is the hallmark of CLU. The Visiting Team was struck by the ability of different religious traditions to work together to create a place where dialogue could occur, within an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.

While CLU primarily viewed diversity issues through the lens of religious diversity, their handbooks and positions clearly also included the notion of the acceptance of racial and ethnic, and sexual identify as well. For example, the Employee Handbook grants the same rights to dependents of same sex unions/partnerships that it does to marriages of different sexes. (CFR 1.4)

In its admission policy (see catalog, p. 14) CLU declares that it does not discriminate on the basis of “...race, sex, gender, age, religious tradition, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation.”

CLU also states in its University Catalogue its policy, and commitment to equal opportunity in its hiring practices:

Claremont Lincoln University is an Equal Employment Opportunity employer and is committed to the principal of Affirmative Action and non-discrimination. It is the University's policy to provide Equal Employment Opportunity to all employees and applicants in actions of recruitment, selection, training, promotion, transfers, compensation, benefits and all other terms and conditions of employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, ancestry, age, physical or mental disability, veteran status or any other basis prohibited under law. The President of the University and all administrative, management and supervisory personnel are committed to this policy and its enforcement.

The Visiting Team observed a working environment that appeared to embrace diversity in a manner that provided a safe, warm and accepting place for employees and students. The climate appeared to support the genuine living out of the diversity policy statements.

No employee or student grievances have been filed to date, nor did the confidential communications to the Visiting Team reveal any underlying tensions. While the absence of complaints does not assure that an inclusive environment exists, the Visiting Team believed the institution's high value on the "Golden-rule," and the institution's commitment to living it out has created a warm and inclusive environment for the CLU community (CFR 1.4).

The institution is entirely independent and is organized as a public benefit corporation under the California State Code. It is a 501 C (3) non-profit for IRS purposes. Its Bylaws state that its primary purpose is educational in nature, and the by-laws provide for self-selection of new and continuing directors (self-perpetuating). The Visiting Team found that its stated purposes and governance structure *mostly* conforms to its operations. At the time of the Visit the Claremont Lincoln University Consortium had ceased to exist, in practice, but had not been eliminated from the Corporate By-laws. Members of the Consortium, according to the by-laws have the right to appoint Directors to the CLU Board of Directors. Since the Consortium has been removed from existence, the by-laws need to be revised to conform to practice. The Visiting Team found that the Board of Directors is comprised of highly qualified, talented, and committed members who embrace the mission and purposes of the institution, and certainly meets the Standard for an independent Board of Directors (CFR 1.5).

CLU publishes its cost of attendance, and the expected time required to graduate in both its catalog and on its website. These two sources of information are available to prospective students and the public at large. The website is always available, and is in sync with the University Catalog. Conversations with students confirmed that the current students felt that all published information was truthful and accurate. The student grievance and complaint policy is also published in both the University Catalog and on the website. The website gives a very detailed description of how the process is to work. All written grievances

are stored in the student information system and maintained in accordance with WSCUC standards. The current policy places the burden upon the griever, and all but sexual harassment complaints are handled exclusively through the program directors. The University should consider allowing other methods of complaint for non-academic complaints and grievances. The Academic Leadership team, on which the President is a member, reviews all appeals. This arrangement does not allow for the usual level of appeal from a party not involved in the original review. The Visiting Team believes that the policy needs revision in order to provide a more appropriate level of review (CFR 1.6).

Legacy language found in CLU publications and on the website regarding the Claremont University Consortium and the Sikh Center, and perhaps other centers, should be reviewed to ensure that the present reality conforms to those statements (CFR 1.6).

The University's finances are regularly audited by an independent CPA firm qualified to conduct audits. These audits are made available to the community through its website. At the time of the Visit, the 2014 financial reports had not yet been posted (CFR 1.7).

The institution has always openly and accurately communicated with the Commission, and has closely followed all of the Commission's policies. For example, when major changes occurred in the relationship with CST, the Commission was quickly notified. The President of CLU provides a lengthy update monthly to WSCUC staff (CFR 1.8).

## **Standard II: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions**

Claremont Lincoln University (CLU) offers three distinct Master's Degree programs: M.A. in Ethical Leadership; M.A. in Interfaith Action; M.A. in Social Impact. Each was approved through the WSCUC Substantive Change process in either 2012 or 2014. Each degree program requires 30 semester units to complete. These degree programs are offered via on-line delivery format, requiring students to complete reading assignments, actively engage in discussion boards, and complete projects and writing assignments. Since these degree programs were recently approved by the Substantive Change process, further discussion regarding standards, degree level and content will not be enjoined. It is sufficient to note that the process for developing these degree programs was highly interactive, involved numerous experts from their respective fields of study and appear to incorporate appropriate methods for determining student achievement of learning outcomes. (CFR 2.1, 2.2)

One note to ponder: students are required to take four core courses and one capstone course that reflect Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO). In addition, students are to take two elective courses and are encouraged to select electives from areas of study outside of their emphasis. That leaves only three courses for students to take within their major degree program. The Program Directors indicated that several changes were underway in expanding the courses required for the degree programs. It is recommended that these changes be made soon and that public disclosure is provided. (CFR 2.3)

A careful review of sample course syllabi (including four of the core courses) indicates a heavy reliance upon external reading. This is not unnatural in a graduate program of study, although when compounded with a ten-week “microterm” and active weekly participation in discussion boards, the load appears to be substantial, especially for students who are currently employed. Students indicated that the load was heavy but not overt. Members of the academic staff also noted that careful attention is given to ensure that a balanced approach to reading assignments is consistently applied throughout all courses. Since many of the courses are taught by teaching faculty (akin to adjunct faculty) a more focused review should be conducted as a few discrepancies were observed.

CLU currently employs four full-time faculty; three serve as program directors for each of the three degree programs and one as program director for the core courses. The remaining faculty are hired as teaching faculty or contributing faculty. It appears that there is reliance upon teaching (adjunct) faculty within all three degree programs. As student enrollments grow, the institution should carefully monitor the impact to ensure sufficient full-time faculty are employed to manage and maintain academic quality.

It is noted that nearly everyone who works at CLU, and holds the appropriate credentials, also teach. All of this is normal and customary with a young institution. Faculty credentials appear to meet standard criteria for quality in their respective disciplines. (CFR 2.1)

The University catalog identifies eligibility criteria for admission including completion of a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited institution as defined by WASC and a minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. A specific major at the undergraduate level is not required for admission. The Admissions Officer noted that an individual with an undergraduate degree in science would be equally qualified as an individual who earned a degree in humanities or languages or music. The narrative states that “reflective answers to a series of short-answer questions that speak to their intentions and hopes for participation in Claremont Lincoln programs” will also be required for admission. A small team is utilized to review admission documents with recommendations presented to the Academic Leadership Team. From the data presented, it appears that there is a fairly normal ratio of inquiries to students admitted (approximately 10%). Additionally, some students are rejected based upon the stated criteria. (CFR 2.2)

A careful review was conducted on many course syllabi including two Capstone courses to determine evidence of developing basic research skills in students. The visible evidence from this review could not substantiate much effort in readings, assignments or discussions that developed research skills. The Interfaith Capstone course offered some verbiage in its description that students would “define and analyze a critical social problem” (p. 55) and that they would “conduct data collection and analysis” (p. 56). No evidence was located in the course assignments to support these statements. For instance, the Program Outcome Rubric (Exhibit 22) for the Ethical Leadership degree indicates four Program Learning Outcomes (PLO). There is no mention of research skills. PLOs

for the Interfaith Action and Social Impact degrees have very weak learning outcomes that are not directly linked to evaluation criteria. (CFR 2.8)

Faculty appeared to be integrally involved with determining SLOs, assessing student learning and educational standards for student accomplishment. (CFR 2.3, CFR 2.4) Initially, these efforts were accomplished through a series of "Curriculum Labs" where faculty, administrators and consultants gathered to "hammer out" the necessary components. This certainly appears to have been a dynamic interaction that led to cohesively structured and consistent courses, assignments and assessments.

Teaching and learning activities were closely monitored via a review of the LMS for several courses. Postings of course material, assignments, discussion boards and various teaching modules were scanned for thoroughness and level of rigor. It appears that students are actively engaged in the teaching/learning process and are provided regular and critical feedback (CFR 2.5). Appropriate variation is evident in the teaching/learning activities indicating freedom for the faculty to explore and engage students in learning according to faculty selected materials. Although these courses and their learning activities were developed by teams far in advance of teaching, it is affirming that faculty continue to reserve the right to modify and enhance the teaching/learning process based upon their knowledge, experience and expertise.

Systematic program review occurs every 4-7 years, although it is unclear that data exists for a complete review to have occurred as none of the programs have been in existence for more than four years. However, a process has been designed that includes three steps:

1. Preparation of a self-study
2. Self-study reviewed by external review team
3. Results reviewed again (not specified by whom) with the generation of a Findings and Recommendations Report submitted to the Academic Leadership Team.

The process appears to be in place but there is some confusion regarding who manages the process. In one place it notes that the Assessment Team manages the process but in Exhibit 10 it states that the Report is sent to the Academic Leadership Team. Clarity for the management of the program review process would benefit the institution. (CFR 2.7)

It was further discovered that programs are informally reviewed annually. The process is well informed by faculty and student evaluations although this process of continual review could lead to a lack of continuity over time. The academic leadership will need to ensure that a proper mix of regular review does not negatively impact course consistency in meeting learning outcomes.

The expectations for scholarship and research are clearly articulated by CLU in its self-study. CLU is intentionally focused on developing in its students the skills and capacities for leadership in the arenas in which they will serve. To this end the student-centered nature of the educational work focuses on research and projects that are driven by student interests and their practical concerns. Student centered learning, and action related research projects are core to the

research focus for faculty and students. Participation is a key aspect of research and scholarship. There are clearly links among the teaching, research, and scholarly function at CLU.

The greatest challenges for the scholarly creativity aspects of CLU concern developing, identifying, and communicating to faculty and students alike the criteria for assessing the quality and standards of the projects and materials that are developed. In traditional universities the measures of quality and excellence are determined typically by the discipline and the academy. The issue of external review of scholarly quality is also a key variable for consideration. What counts as scholarship and how is it to be measured? For CLU to achieve the prominence it seeks in its strategic direction, it will need to demonstrate to external publics that its standards of excellence are being realized. Identifying the criteria for scholarly development for students should be determined more adequately for CLU. (CFR 2.8)

The Visiting Team was impressed with the creative thinking that exists about faculty research at CLU. In that CLU is committed to integrating theory and practice, the frequent bifurcation that exists between these two arenas presents some challenges. The Team saw a hesitancy at CLU to fully embrace the practical and student-centered dimensions of its research focus and encouraged CLU to be bold and clear about these directions going forward. Much of the opportunity and promise for the future of CLU rests in its innovative and groundbreaking initiatives in the “scholarship of application.”

CLU’s few, but growing number of, students have been progressing through their respective programs in a timely manner. CLU has in place all of the resources to ensure student success. The current staff/faculty to student ratio allows for close personal attention, but obviously that ratio cannot be sustained going forward. It will be important for CLU to navigate the transition of growth so that the high quality of interaction, which students lauded in their comments to the visiting team, carries over to a larger student body. As noted below (see 2.13) CLU would do well to have more assessment instruments for portions of student services, however, the data they collect on students and their progress throughout their programs is thorough and provides a rich and growing data pool for future assessment and review. (CFR 2.10)

Because of the online setting, co-curricular activities for students are challenging. CLU has developed two co-curricular avenues: “The Summits” and “The Gatherings.” These innovative events are the central activities for students to have “face to face” activities. CLU describes these as “university-wide opportunities for students and faculty from all three programs and are also open to members of the wider Claremont Lincoln community” (p. 21–22). While these events have significant potential and have already presented profitable networking opportunities as well as bringing in notable speakers, they lack an assessment component. Since the events are neither mandatory nor (especially for non-Southern California students) practical to attend, they will benefit students who live in proximity or have the financial resources for flights and lodging. They are a solid beginning for activities, which, for a non-resident, on-line student body, is admittedly a difficult undertaking. CLU leadership has begun a process to raise funds to support student scholarships for attending the

Summits. Financial goals have been established and there is evidence to support progress to ensure broad student participation.(CFR 2.11)

Certain policies within an array of varied documents (e.g. diversity, grievance, disability) should be reviewed for continuity and internal consistency and they should be coalesced into individual documents for quick and clear reference. Often links to specific policies simply refer the reader to various portions of the student or faculty handbook. This has the effect of rendering what might otherwise be clear and straightforward policies, somewhat arcane. (CFR 2.12)

As an emerging institution the maturation of student services (and delivering the appropriate services in an online setting) is still a work in progress. In their self-study (p. 22) CLU stated, “The following services are provided to our students and utilize *StuServices*, our online, dedicated, student service system” [italics added]. However, it became clear in interviews with the staff that there actually was no such system. This was apparently an error in the editing process of the self-study. While there is not a portal on the CLU website called *StuServices*, the resources listed are available to all students through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous tools, which are directed by and through the Director of Student Services.

CLU would benefit from individual assessments for student services, allowing for specific information to further enhance student learning, especially as it relates to IT, advising, financial aid, and similar areas.

The future of library services (see discussion on p. 22, in CFR 3.5) is also in need of clarification. While resources have been identified it will be important to secure accessibility to those resources and provide instruction in the use of those resources (it was noted that a basic orientation course on research methods and strategy was lacking) to ensure a seamless transition from the use of CST to CLU's own online information system. (CFR 2.13)

CLU clearly states that their programs “offer a unique set of courses” and as a result courses cannot be transferred into CLU from other institutions or with the programs themselves. (CFR 2.14)

### **Standard III: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability**

Claremont Lincoln University (CLU) by design is developing a flat administrative and academic structure to suit its organizational and aspirational needs consistent with its mission and philosophy. The key roles in the organization are defined not only by customary designations, e.g., President, Executive Vice President, but also by the values that these roles seek to inculcate and foster, e.g., inspiration, innovation, strategizing, and implementing. The role and movement of personnel is based on the university's organizational needs and team structure. The senior management team members of the university are also active participants in program design and program delivery. A careful review of the curriculum vitae of senior management members reveal that the members are not only seasoned administrators but that they are also involved in teaching in their fields of specialization.

Most of CLU's key leadership positions are currently filled with plans for new hires as the institution matures and increases its enrollments. The university's senior management is currently staffed by a President, Chief Financial Officer-Controller, Executive Vice President, and Senior Vice President of Operations who also serves as the Chief Information Officer. The senior management is supported by experienced and seasoned personnel, sufficient in number (29 full-time) at this start-up phase to carry out most of the functions consistent with the University's mission and values. Most, if not all, of the key positions are filled with individuals adequately prepared for the positions they occupy (CFR 3.1). Another key position is the Director of Institutional Research that has been created and filled since the previous institutional visit. This position fills a crucial requirement for the institutional research function. (CFR 3.1, 4.2, 4.7) The director of IR also chairs the university's assessment team. Some staff positions are currently occupied by consultants and include those of instructional design, director of marketing, and public relations. The collaboration between the CLU faculty, academic staff, and consultants is described by all participants as highly professional, and supportive. The services provided by consultants are described as timely, responsive, and competent. (CFR 3.1, 3.2)

CLU has access to sufficient faculty to support the programs that it offers. CLU has four full-time faculty members. Three of these four full-time faculty members serve as program directors of the three Masters programs whereas the fourth full-time faculty member is dedicated to CLU's core concentration "the Claremont Core" which serves as the foundation of all three academic programs. All four full-time faculty members serve on the Academic Leadership Team (ALT). The ALT members appear to be fully prepared and committed to oversee the programs under their purview. (CFR 3.1) The full-time faculty members are supported by contributing faculty members and teaching faculty members whose positions augment the full-time faculty in roles such as assessment support, curriculum development, and design of the curriculum. (CFR 3.1, 3.2) In the Faculty Guidelines document, the following explanation of this tripartite structure is offered:

*Program Faculty:* A designation of full-time faculty members who provide programmatic leadership and teach for the University;

*Teaching Faculty:* A designation of a member of the faculty contracted to teach courses and serve on committees for the University;

*Contributing Faculty:* A designation of a scholar or practitioner who contributes to the intellectual life of the institution (e.g. through program evaluation, curriculum design, content creation, conference presentations, institutes or centers, etc.) but who does not regularly teach courses.

In interviews with the administrative leadership team and the academic leadership team, the team inquired about the sufficiency of staff and how staffing levels and faculty levels were determined. Faculty levels were described as providing at least one full-time faculty member per academic program while also being augmented by contributing and teaching faculty and adjusted for program enrollments. Staffing levels were directly related to student headcounts that were explained clearly as based on specific enrollment changes. Academic administrators believe that they are providing reasonable assurance of the

quality of part-time faculty evaluation and curriculum development. (CFR 3.1)

The faculty appears to be fully engaged. The team determined that even the teaching faculty with individual course contracts are more committed to student learning and success than the tenured faculty at many institutions. In interviews with faculty, the team found that shared dialogue among faculty members regarding their classroom instruction, workload efficiencies, responses to students, and concept attainment in similar disciplines was present. (CFR 2.1, 2.8, 3.1-3.3) The qualifications of CLU faculty members are consistent with those typically found in U.S. graduate institutions. For example, all of the full-time faculty members have PhDs; likewise, the contributing and teaching faculty also appear to be highly qualified, with the vast majority holding doctorates or other appropriate credentials. The teaching faculty members are vetted through the Academic Leadership Team to ensure that their qualifications are consistent with the graduate classes they are engaged to teach.

CLU has established recruitment, orientation, workload, and evaluation policies for faculty in its Faculty Handbook. Faculty positions are to be advertised widely, and in accordance with applicable law, in publications such as the Chronicle of Higher Education and on-line in Inside Higher Education. Adjunct hiring practices are explained in the Faculty Handbook. Faculty workload is also carefully described in the Faculty Handbook. Reviews for both contributing and teaching faculty are conducted by ALT, and the results are provided to the President. Criteria for faculty evaluations are carefully laid out in the Faculty Handbook, both for full-time and teaching faculty, and include ALT and student evaluations, including the students' assessment of how well the course satisfied the student learning outcomes specified in course proposals and syllabi. The institution could strengthen the Faculty Handbook to include faculty self-evaluation and other evaluative measures beyond teaching evaluations by students. (CFR 3.2)

CLU provides professional development opportunities for its faculty, especially in their particular discipline, and also provides on-site professional development opportunities for its faculty in the area of teaching development and online course development. Professional development opportunities for staff include on-site training, such as the project management workshop provided to staff within the last year, and professional development opportunities at professional associations during the year. WSCUC training has also been funded to assist the staff and faculty in order to fully comply with the assessment needs relative to its educational mission. (CFR 3.3)

CLU is a new institution, and only has two full years of independent financial operations, following its prior incubation period with CST. As such, only two independent financial audits were available to the team, for that period. For the years ending June 30, 2013, and June 30, 2014 cash on-hand was \$1,380,060, and \$4,064,442, respectively. All operating ratios are favorable, save perhaps the percent of revenue derived from contributions. Contribution revenue, including in-kind contribution revenue was 83% and 88%, respectively, for June 30, 2013 and June 30, 2014, of unrestricted total revenues. To date the majority of the contribution revenues came from "related parties." The FY 2013 Financial Audit reported that 73% of the contribution revenue for the year came from

three donors. For FY 2014 99% of the contribution revenue came from 2 donors. (Note: a \$50,000,000 revocable pledge, to be delivered in varying amounts annually is the primary source of most contribution income to date.) One of the institutional financial goals is to diversify its revenue sources. The stated plan to do so is primarily through increase program revenues, tuition and certificate revenues. In order to achieve this goal the institution will need to aggressively and consistently execute its current plans. To date, no institutional deficits have occurred, and, almost certainly will not, as long as the primary donors fulfill their unconditional pledge to cover any operational deficits through the year 2020 (CFR 3.4).

CLU's Strategic Plan illustrates that the financial planning is directly tied to all of its other planning activities. For example, in order to become self-sustaining by FY 2019 the institution plans to increase program revenues to 79% of its total revenue from operations, and to reduce its reliance on contributions to 21%. This will require growing program revenues from its current level of \$991,198 or 11% , in FY 2014 to over \$9,000,000, a ten-fold, increase. At the time of the Visit, few revenues had been generated from other types of programmatic sources, so this indicates aggressive growth for the next few years. CLU currently employs a full-time Director of Educational Programming who oversees the development of the Certificate Programs, and has retained an external consultant in the field. The first certificate programs are scheduled to be launched in March 2015 (CFR 3.4).

**Sustainability and Revenue Diversification:** The institution is currently relying extensively on the founding gift from David Lincoln. For example, in FY14 his contributions provided the vast majority of total revenues, and FY15 will have a similar result. The following table illustrates the institution's goal for revenue diversification:

Revenue Type	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19
<b>Tuition Revenue</b>	1%	10%	19%	27%	34%
<b>Custom Learning</b>	0%	5%	14%	19%	24%
<b>Other Program Revenue</b>	0%	5%	12%	17%	21%
<b>Total Program</b>	1%	20%	43%	63%	79%
<b>Contribution Revenue</b>	99%	80%	55%	37%	21%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

In order to accomplish these goals, the number of students must increase dramatically during the five years included in the plan. The following table illustrates the growth required:

	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19
<b>Projected Number of students</b>	52	130	210	285	360
<b>% increase (year over year)</b>	0%	150%	62%	36%	26%

The tuition forecast goals were established by making extrapolations of existing enrollment patterns to date, and projecting similar patterns, given increased marketing expenditures, into the future. The President and other senior level administrators expressed confidence that the projected enrollment growth will happen. Her confidence is based upon market research and the enrollment successes to date. For example, even without initial accreditation the institution surpassed its enrollment targets for the last two terms starts. Direct marketing dollars for the three MA programs has only recently been spent, and the increased number of inquiries and ultimately matriculates increased as a result. The institution has committed to maintain a continuing advertising allocation into the future (CFR 3.4).

Custom Learning and other program revenue forecasts are largely strategic directions rather than being derived from detailed planning. The Visiting Team recommends that the institution continue to refine plans for the creation and expansion of its custom learning and other programmatic type revenue plans that will support its revenue diversification goals. (CFR 3.4)

CLU provides a broad range of informational technology services to its faculty, staff, and students. Canvas is used for its LMS, Cams 3 Rivers for its administrative computing needs, and its back office servers are provided by Amazon Web Services. Its internet backbone and desktop support is provided by Verizon FIOS, and maintained by Calnet, a California based IT support organization. Members of the University community expressed confidence in and satisfaction with the support provided. The Web presence is maintained in house and provides a robust level of information in a clear and attractive manner (CFR 3.5).

Library services are currently provided through a contract with CST; however, the contract expires at the end of this fiscal year, June 30, 2014. CLU is currently designing its replacement, and the emerging plan is to “in-source” whenever possible. This will entail acquiring direct access to on-line journals and book collections, via a CLU IP address. The current library services appear to be more than adequate for their current, master’s level, student body, and faculty, and CLU’s plan is to replace in a way that does not reduce access to needed library resources. The major challenge will be the interlibrary loan arrangements that require some level of balance between the import and export of books since CLU’s plan does not include a physical library, with physical books. Reference librarian service will be provided by OCLC through its Question Point service, on a 24/7 manner (CFR 3.5).

The proposed budget for the next fiscal year is \$100,000, and is believed to be sufficient to provide the number of journals necessary to support the level of research and readings needed for faculty and staff. The institution should continue to evaluate book borrowing and lending arrangements in order to assure the community has adequate access to information only found in books (CFR 3.5).

Planned growth in students residing in locations outside of the US will require attention to the challenges that they will provide in terms of access and use of the technology tools that work well for US students. CLU should consider

studying the implications of international on-line education before a major expansion occurs (CFR 3.5).

#### **Standard IV: Creating and Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement.**

CLU has demonstrated superb internal monitoring and assessment of its programs. Its “Curriculum Labs” in particular are creative and the wide participation in these seems to generate both the development of creative programs as well as the necessary assessment and monitoring of its projects with input from all the key constituencies. The enthusiasm for these Labs is quite evident. The assessment process in general at CLU is well defined with clear criteria for defining standards for its programs. (CFR 4.1)

The distinctive feature of CLU’s assessment is its use of methodologies for assessment from outside higher education. The Visiting Team was impressed with CLU’s engagement with outside consultants who bring expertise in the fields of inquiry and practice that CLU is engaged in. The basic commitment of CLU is sound: to “use standards appropriate for a desired product; to collect information and data to determine whether the enterprise meets those standards; to collect this data frequently sufficient to make adjustments before the process is completed.” CLU is to be commended for its creative use of industry standards from other organizational contexts. (CFR 4.1)

CLU’s commitment to data collection and assessment is solid. A highly capable professional who is actively engaged in data collection, analysis and dissemination staffs the Institutional Research office. The issue is always to identify what purposes and what ends the data serve. The CLU leadership realizes that the reason for gathering data is to serve the institutional goals and purposes. Constant alignment of outcomes to institutional identity is evident to all at CLU. It appears that as additional data are collected, CLU will utilize the outcomes to improve and enhance institutional effectiveness. (CFR 4.2)

CLU embraces the use of evidence to make improvement in its processes and programs. The visiting team examined quality assurance processes (CFR 4.4) in a number of areas including program assessment, course review (Standard 2), and information technology (Standard 3). The team also examined CLU’s strategic plan and the success indicators by which it measures the quantity and quality of the question “How will we know we have met a strategic goal?” (CFR 4.6)

Claremont Lincoln has set a methodology in place for assessment of institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) on an annual basis along with a four to seven year cycle. The formal program review (CFR 4.1) process at CLU consists of two review cycles: Annual Program Review and a four or seven year Comprehensive Program. The formal program review process is part of an overall institutional education effectiveness plan that takes into account the program learning outcomes (PLOs) and their relevancy to the institutional learning outcomes (ILOs).

The Annual Program Review is conducted by the Office of Institutional Research in consultation with the Academic Leadership Team. The Annual Program Review consists of analysis of direct and indirect data on student learning such as student term papers for individual courses, data on the course learning outcomes and their evaluation relative to the program learning outcomes, student self-evaluations, faculty advising, course evaluations, and evaluations by supervisors of student knowledge and performance during internships or off-site work, where appropriate. The Annual Program Review also takes into account the graduation and retention rates, placement data, alumni data, and student satisfaction data on co-curricular activities. Data are also gathered on student work load, debt load, scholarship stipulations, scheduling of classes, and student services. The Annual Program Review data analysis and recommendations are reviewed by ALT and also by other administrative units for planning, budgeting, and tracking purposes.

In addition to the Annual Program Review, CLU conducts a Comprehensive Program Review aligned with a presumed comprehensive accreditation cycle and consisting of either a four or seven year assessment cycle. The Comprehensive Program Review rolls multiple years of Annual Program Review assessments into the Comprehensive Program Review process and adds program self-study, and reviews of academic programs from collaborating institutions which help the individual programs in assessing the achievement of program outcomes or by external faculty in relevant fields (4.1, 4.4).

The schedule for program review for the individual academic programs could benefit from more formalized development and enhanced data sets to be used in a program review. Future program reviews should include analysis of cumulative and relevant data on student demographics, course quality, faculty & staff support, course assessment, financial analytics, retention and graduation data, alumni surveys, while utilizing industry standard benchmarks such as the IHEP's Quality on the Line or WCET's Best Practices document on online learning. CLU needs to ensure that the program reviews are coordinated and based on a sustainable schedule. It is also unclear what role the Board of Directors plays in the program review process.

With the newness of CLU, assessment data are significantly limited. Future data sources, such as surveys from alumni and employers, need to be considered and developed to ensure that CLU meets its mission objective of "putting wisdom to work." As CLU matures, it will also be vital to create a mechanism for engaging alumni in its institutional assessment.

CLU has an assessment team in place headed by its Director of Institutional Research and composed of key administrative and academic staff. Articulated learning outcomes for all its programs are in place; however, ongoing effort to coordinate and align the student, program, and institutional outcomes is needed, and must be supported by more definitive data collection and institutional research processes. Given its projected rapid growth, multiple degree programs, and especially its multiple admissions entry, CLU has an obvious need for a very robust and effective program of institutional research. (CFR 4.5) Essential here is a reliable, transparent, and analytically rigorous system of tracking student outcomes (retention, graduation, time-to-degree) by entry cohort, student

characteristics, and degree program. The institutional research capacity of CLU is also hampered by a lack of appropriate data and comparable benchmark data from other institutions largely due to the unique nature of its mission and newness of the endeavor (CFR 4.5). CLU had only 13 graduates at the time of the visit therefore systematic stakeholder input from alumni is still a future endeavor. CLU has an exciting mission statement and goals for reaching out to the community and creating future stakeholders. It will be important for CLU to have , “shovel-ready,” assessment instruments in place to gain the necessary data (CFR 4.4), analyze it through the collective work of the assessment team (CFR 4.5), and respond to a changing higher education environment (CFR 4.7).

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

Although Claremont Lincoln University is still relatively new, the Team found much to commend this dynamic educational community. Words that were shared during Team meetings included: “creative, engaged, innovative, enthusiastic, committed, transformational, and collaborative.” It was further noted that members of the CLU community are so committed to the institutional mission and vision, in particular, the student attainment of outcomes, that a distinctly “family environment” encompasses all aspects of this institution. Those dynamics are not commonplace in most higher educational institutions.

In particular, the Team commended Claremont Lincoln University in the following areas:

1. CLU has a clearly defined vision and mission and has developed a set of programs and organizational structures that are consistently aligned to achieve its institutional aspirations and goals.
2. Claremont Lincoln University has engaged in an excellent analysis of the landscape of graduate higher education to identify needs and deficiencies that can be addressed by creative and innovative programs of study and engagement.
3. Strategic partnerships have been identified to affirm the institutional vision and position CLU to become a leader in innovative, interdisciplinary teaching, and learning.
4. CLU is to be commended for its highly collaborative Curriculum Labs used to build a unique curriculum and that serves a model for innovative program design.
5. The alignment of the mission, the core programs and curriculum and organizational design and operation is strong and effective.
6. A culture of innovation permeates the institution thoroughly, and is reflected in its policies, organization and program development.
7. The current financial position, due to a large philanthropic gift provides sustainability for the foreseeable future that should provide ample time for the institution to become self-sustaining.
8. The Core Curriculum and the three academic programs are cohesive, integrated, structured and substantive.

9. Institutional learning outcomes, program learning outcomes and student learning outcomes are well defined.
10. The Team found student responses to be inspiring and enthusiastically supportive of the transformational nature of programs as delivered by its faculty and staff.

In addition to these commendations, Claremont Lincoln University also has additional work to do in specific areas. During the exit presentation, the following items were shared with the CLU community, although expanded here to assist the Commission:

1. CLU is encouraged to be more explicit in defining institutional identity by highlighting the most important descriptors that will explain CLU to its constituent audiences. Although the Team determined that the CLU mission is clear, additional information is needed to inform various publics regarding its pursuit of graduate education for practitioners.
2. CLU is encouraged to create a clearly defined Grievance Policy for grade or other academic evaluation disputes as well as a re-formulated Student Appeals Policy to include levels of appeal that protect students and eliminates potential conflicts of interest. These policies are vitally important and as currently stated, are somewhat ambiguous with regard to formal appeals beyond the Program Directors.
3. CLU is encouraged to clearly articulate statements on developing and assessing expectations for scholarly skills for students, faculty and the broader scope of program assessment. While CLU indicated that they are purposefully educating practitioners, further clarification is necessary to ensure that student and faculty expectations for scholarly skills (application research) are well defined, disseminated, and assessed.
4. CLU is encouraged to refine plans for custom learning (certificate programs) and other programmatic-type of revenues in order to achieve revenue diversification goals. The central issue is financial sustainability. Plans are underway to expand revenue streams beyond the three degree programs. However, there was insufficient evidence to support long-term projections for enhanced revenue production.
5. CLU is encouraged to revise the corporate By-Laws to conform with current practice.
6. CLU is encouraged to enhance their data collection, analysis and dissemination to inform annual program evaluations and assess the Strategic Plan. Additional effort is necessary to ensure that data-driven decision-making is deeply embedded within the CLU community.
7. CLU is encouraged to develop solutions to ensure appropriate library resources are available to students and faculty after June 30, 2015. The current arrangement with Claremont School of Theology will expire in June 2015.

8. CLU is encouraged to provide faculty with concrete guidelines for the credit hour policy and ensure that implementation occurs in a consistent manner. In particular, although it was stated that careful coordination exists in monitoring student assignments, reading lists and other educational activities, the evidence indicated some significant variation throughout certain courses. Since the degree programs are offered entirely online and the microterms are ten weeks in length, this level of monitoring seems needful and necessary.
9. CLU is encouraged to closely monitor the utilization of the numbers of teaching faculty as the scale of student enrollment expands.
10. CLU is encouraged to continue to mature the assessment of ILOs, PLOs and SLOs in anticipation of program review. The Team acknowledged that formal program reviews have not yet been conducted and although a process is in place, maturing assessment measures now (especially the alignment of ILOs, PLOs and SLOs) would only benefit the intended outcomes.

## **APPENDICIES**