

REPORT OF THE WSCUC VISITING TEAM

SEEKING ACCREDITATION VISIT 2

For Institutions Seeking Initial Accreditation or Candidacy

To Alder Graduate School of Education

November 12-15, 2018

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

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## **SECTION I. OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT**

### **A. Description of Institution and Visit**

Alder Graduate School of Education's (Alder's) vision is centered around the core belief that, "Outstanding teachers and leaders change students' lives and make the world better and more just." The institution sees its vision fulfilled through its mission to "to create opportunity and cultivate success for every student by recruiting and educating excellent teachers and leaders who reflect our schools' communities" (Vision and Mission Statement). Alder's mission is to recruit and educate teachers through a teacher residency model that was founded at Aspire Public Schools in 2010 by recruiting teachers that demographically reflect the students they serve. The institution publicly communicates its vision and mission, and uses these as a guide for the strategic plan.

Since 2010, Alder has operated under the umbrella and accreditation of the University of the Pacific (Pacific), establishing multiple sites through their regional cohort model in Los Angeles, California's Central Valley, San Francisco Bay Area, and Memphis. In 2016, Pacific chose to withdraw support for the Memphis location, which compelled Alder to turn to one of its partners in Memphis to support that location.

The residency model that Alder employs originated at Aspire Public Schools in 2010. Aspire Public Schools, founded in 1998, operates charter schools in low-income neighborhoods. In 2010, Aspire Public Schools began training teachers and called its program Aspire Teacher Residency Program. In 2015, the decision was made to create an entity separate from Aspire Public Schools, while still partnering closely with the organization, with the purpose of gaining independence to create new partnerships with other K-12 public school systems including districts and charter management organizations. The

Aspire Teacher Residency formally became Aspire University when it was granted its 501(c)(3) status.

Alder Graduate School of Education emerged as the new name for Aspire University on July 1, 2017 with the purpose of rebranding to emphasize Alder's independence from Aspire Public Schools.

Alder currently offers a single degree program, the Master of Arts in Education with a concentration in Teaching or Special Education, under the auspices and accreditation of the University of the Pacific. Throughout the residency program, courses are designed to allow students to earn both a California teaching credential alongside a Master of Arts in Education. Alder continues to offer only the Master of Arts in Education degree and has not added any new degrees since receiving Eligibility.

Alder received provisional approval from the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education in June 2016 and is currently seeking initial accreditation from WSCUC. By becoming an accredited entity and separate from Pacific, the institution foresees possibilities for expansion and partnerships with schools and districts as a way for Alder to meet the demand for teachers in the K-12 classrooms across the country.

The SAV1 visit was conducted from October 23- 26, 2017. At the WSCUC Commission meeting on February 15, 2018, the panel reviewed the SAV1 institutional report and exhibits, the team report, and Alder's January 17, 2018 response to the team report. As a result, the Commission took the following actions:

1. Receive the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 team report
2. Schedule a Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 in fall 2018

The following recommendations were made:

1. Develop and implement an adequately detailed operational plan to stand alone as a graduate school of education. This plan would include action items, assigned responsible people, budget, and deadlines. [CFRs 1.5, 3.4, 3.5, 3.8]
2. Demonstrate an ability to transition from a philanthropy-based revenue stream to a tuition-based stream by adding partnerships and increasing enrollment. [CFR 3.4]
3. Expand current strategic planning efforts to clearly connect to the operating budget process and include regularly monitored, specific, and measurable indicators, relying upon appropriate data analyses. [CFR 4.6]
4. Develop a dedicated institutional research (IR) function with a viable IR agenda to include robust student-level information on academic and enrollment behaviors, student satisfaction, as well as others. Likewise, develop a central repository of data for decision-making purposes. A central repository of data may come in the form of an SIS, or a home-grown relational database customized to the informational needs of the institution. [CFRs 1.2, 4.1, 4.2]
5. Build a culture of assessment with faculty engagement and ownership, with the development of an academic program assessment plan, on-going assessment of student learning, and commitment to program improvement through the utilization of student learning data to inform practice. [CFRs 2.4, 4.3, 4.4]
6. Mobilize efforts to increase the roster of faculty with terminal degrees and expectations for scholarly activity to shape a culture of graduate-level scholarship. [CFR 3.1]
7. Develop and implement a formal shared governance structure that engages stakeholders and is well-aligned with Alder's mission and vision. [CFR 3.10]

8. Ensure the quality and rigor of academic programs, making certain that the expectations for student learning are appropriate to the master's degree, and elevating the quality of online course delivery to strengthen student learning and engagement. [CFRs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6]
9. Deploy a realistic enrollment management plan informed by a unified vision for marketing and recruitment with appropriate oversight to achieve sustainability and diversity goals in keeping with anticipated enrollment growth. [CFR 3.4]
10. Establish dedicated academic support and student services to include library, registrar, and information services among others to meet the needs of the specific types of students the institution serves and the programs it offers. [CFRs 2.13, 3.5]

Beginning on November 13, 2018 and ending on November 15, 2018, the SAV2 visiting team, comprised of four members, three of whom served on the SAV1 team, interviewed and met with Alder's constituents and reviewed additional documents provided by the institution. The team appreciated the institution's organization in preparation for the visit, their hospitality, and their high responsiveness to any additional documents the team requested.

#### **B. The Institution's Seeking Accreditation Visit Report: Quality and Rigor of the Review and Report**

Alder presented a well-written and well-organized report that addressed each of the recommendations from the previous action letter. Each recommendation was addressed and referenced with the appropriate Criteria For Review (CFR). The Standards and CFRs were clearly delineated throughout the report and addressed through both narrative reporting and evidence provided electronically, to support progress toward each Standard. Following the team

conference call, the team requested additional documents to help substantiate the progress that Alder narrated throughout the report. Alder was very responsive in providing the additional evidence.

The team met with the Accreditation Steering Committee during the visit and learned about the deeply reflective and highly engaged approach the institution took in preparation for the report and visit. From addressing the 10 recommendations to compiling the SAV2 report, Alder actively and transparently engaged its many stakeholders in the process and involved committees in gathering evidence and providing input on the report. The team found Alder to have taken a rigorous, collaborative, and thorough response to all the recommendations and demonstrated evidence toward educational effectiveness and quality improvement in becoming an independent institution.

### **C. Response to Issues Raised in Past Commission Letters**

The last Commission action letter included 10 recommendations addressing CFRs from all four Standards. In Alder's narrative report, supporting documents, and responses during the SAV2 visit, Alder thoroughly addressed all 10 recommendations.

The team found Alder has made notable progress toward operating as an independent graduate school of education through its success in hiring qualified persons in key positions, financial plans for independence, systems and processes to ensure quality improvement, and formalized roles and responsibilities to sustain a shared governance and decision-making model.

After reviewing the evidence provided, the team finds that Alder has met all four Standards at the level of Initial Accreditation. This report sets forth the team's reasons for its finding, addressing each Standard and CFR in depth in Section II below.

## **SECTION II. EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH WSCUC'S STANDARDS AND IDENTIFIED CFRs FROM PRIOR SEEKING ACCREDITATION VISITS**

### **Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives**

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

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

The March 9, 2018 Commission action letter encouraged Alder to expand its publicly disseminated student achievement, retention and graduation data. Alder has adequately responded by hiring a senior IR officer with considerable experience in data management. Alder has expanded public data on student achievement, retention, and graduation data on their website, disaggregating outcomes more accurately to depict s Since the last review, Alder has established agreements with 10 district partners or CMOs. It holds commitments from four partners and obtained two letters of intent from two others.

udent achievement.

Student achievement data in the form of program completion data, Master's oral exam passage rates, PACT/edTPA passage rates, hiring rates, and course evaluation is comprehensive, thorough, and available and transparent on the institution's website.

Alder has begun developing a repository of data, Alder Impact Measure (AIM), projected to be fully utilized by spring 2019. Phase 1 has been launched and is in pilot mode housing admissions/enrollment data using an Oracle platform (data warehouse linked to analytics component). Alder has tested the dashboard, runs reports on it, and has provided demonstrations to their constituents as they continue to refine the process.

#### **CFR 1.5 Education as primary purpose; autonomy from external entities**

The Commission action letter encouraged Alder to operate with appropriate autonomy and to provide an update on Alder's transitions from its partnership with Pacific to a stand-alone graduate school of education upon their next visit.

Alder has adequately responded with a detailed transition plan by making key hires to its leadership team. Alder's strategic plan realistically accounts for growth and the need to add staff over time to support the growth. The 13 positions filled since their SAV1 were crucial to the institution's bid to become a free-standing institution. The newly filled positions include: senior IR officer, registrar and director of student services, enrollment specialist, instructional and research librarian, senior director of partnerships, director of partnerships, director of recruitment, outreach & recruitment manager, associate dean, research analyst, residency coach in Memphis, database specialist, and director of financial aid. Alder has developed a detailed operational transition plan and hiring plan.

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

The Commission action letter encouraged Alder to provide an independent audit of the institution's finances, which was not available at the time of the SAV1.

Alder provided the 2017 independently audited financial statements that were not previously available at the time of SAV1. The statements showed a relatively clean audit with only one deficiency noted in the management letter. The 2018 independent financial audit was also presented with no control deficiencies noted.

## **Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions**

The team finds Alder demonstrated evidence of overall compliance with Standard 2 at a level sufficient for Initial Accreditation, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination.

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

The Commission action letter encouraged Alder to ensure the quality and rigor of academic programs that are delivered online to strengthen student learning and engagement. Since SAV1, Alder has hired six new full-time staff with doctoral degrees, five of whom teach courses. The percentage of courses taught by faculty who hold doctorates has also increased from 60% in 2017-2018 to 71% in 2018-2019 as Alder has mobilized its efforts to attract adjunct and affiliate adjunct faculty who hold doctoral degrees. Further, Alder offers a \$400/month living stipend to offset the cost of doctoral tuition for faculty interested in pursuing terminal degrees. One faculty member has taken advantage of this financial support; she has just completed her 13th class and will soon begin writing her dissertation. During the SAV2, the team learned that another faculty member expressed interest in pursuing her doctoral degree. Alder's faculty incentive to encourage the pursuit of terminal degrees appears to be an incentive that is gaining some traction.

Alder now uses a course team approach to ensure that faculty members who hold complementary skill and experience sets, including those who hold doctoral degrees, work together to create learning experiences that blend theory and practice for students. Regarding the quality and rigor of academic programs that are delivered online, three Alder faculty members participated in an online course to bolster their distance-learning instructional design skills and to

develop empathy and understanding for their own users. The “introduce, prepare, enact, analyze” framework that Alder uses for its online learning courses is thoughtful and evidence-based.

During the visit, the institution demonstrated its learning management system (LMS), Canvas, which Alder currently accesses through Pacific. Alder has allocated resources to continue a separate subscription to the service after becoming independent from Pacific. The demonstration of the LMS revealed an organized and systematic approach to online learning, including thoughtfully organized modules with opportunities for students to collaborate through an online forum and shared Google documents. Further, students practice and reflect on their emerging teaching practice while making connections to relevant theory and seminal course texts.

Alder could maximize benefit from the online learning platform by implementing more ongoing formative assessment, including opportunities for students to self-assess and receive instructor feedback on their final course projects prior to a final submission, in order to increase student growth and mastery of course learning outcomes. Peer-to-peer feedback could also increase the quality of the final work that students produce for their online courses. The team encourages Alder to tap into Canvas’s multiple functions to garner additional data points about student engagement in the online platform.

#### **CFR 2.4 Faculty’s collective responsibility for setting SLOs and standards, assessing student learning, demonstrating achievement of standards**

The Commission action letter encouraged Alder to implement widespread faculty engagement with and ownership of academic program assessment, using the results of the assessment to inform practice. Alder has demonstrated impressive faculty engagement for setting Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). Faculty have engaged stakeholders in assessment design

and have attended a WSCUC learning event based on the work of the National Institute for Learning Faculty to analyze specific project data and plan adjustments to improve learning.

In the Spring of 2018, Alder's faculty committee, program review committee, and faculty assembly drafted, refined and approved Alder's articulation of rigor for all learning experience (Attachment 2.01 - Rigor in a Teacher Residency Program) and examined the level of rigor in distance/online courses. During the visit, the team learned more about the "faculty assembly," a meeting forum in which they engage in collective decision making and strategic planning regarding the academic program, faculty hiring, and program development. As an example of how faculty are engaged collectively at various stages in setting standards for student learning and achievement, one faculty member described being invited as a panelist during an interview for prospective instructors who may co-teach the action research course in the future.

Additionally, during the visit it was discovered that during their quarterly meetings, the faculty committee engaged in a process to revise the SLOs through the lens of culturally responsive pedagogy. There was evidence during the visit that Alder has made a commitment to engage faculty in shared decision making and consensus building. Faculty described visiting Columbia Teachers College and High Tech High to learn how other organizations approach this work. Alder expressed to the team its goal to have faculty voice on every committee. One faculty member described how, whereas in the past, decision making was consensus-based, there is now a clear decision-making structure with focused work and alignment within the structure.

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

The Commission action letter encouraged Alder to continue to develop learning outcomes that are directly measurable and provide evidence of achievement of those outcomes.

Faculty committees provide evidence of the productivity and shared engagement among faculty toward setting the standards for student achievement. One of Alder's faculty ad hoc committees refines the "Gateway" assessments in collaboration with Teacher Squared. The Gateways assessments, which align Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and SLOs in the direct assessment of student learning, were fully revised as of June 2018.

During the visit, mentors shared about the role they play in utilizing the Gateway rubric to assess their residents in collaboration with program directors. Faculty described how they collaboratively analyzed Gateway assessment data and utilize it in instructional planning, including planning for mentor seminars, based off direct evidence of residents' learning needs. Faculty also described their efforts to calibrate assessment practices for validity and reliability through the lens of the newly developed guiding principles for assessment at Alder, which include emphasizing depth over breadth, alignment, and making outcomes more directly accessible. [CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.9]

The institution has a structure in place, referred to as "data calls", where course instructors collaborate to calibrate their assessment practices. Ample evidence of the content of these meetings was provided to the team in advance of the visit, and the team learned more the value of the content of these conversations as it served to help faculty in closing the loop in assessing student learning. [CFRs 2.4 and 2.6]

Alder demonstrated a clear and concerted effort to increase rigor in student levels of attainment. In addition to its academic program committee's revision of student outcomes to make them more directly measurable, Alder presented examples of research projects and revised rubrics that are without question, representative of Master's level inquiry and research. The

faculty commented on significant improvement in rigor and achievement since the curricular revisions.

Alder has evidenced growth in this area and has furnished data through their annual program assessment report. The Master's oral exam rubric is comprehensive, uses specific and measurable language, and is aligned with SLOs and PLOs.

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

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

Under these two CFRs, the Commission action letter encouraged Alder to provide an update of the status of the hiring plan, its outcome, and how faculty scholarship will be embedded into faculty hiring and promotion decisions.

Alder has refined its hiring plan and addressed the issues raised about faculty credentials and scholarship. New hires are evaluated through the lens of content expertise. Alder made its first content-expert faculty hire to lead literacy and English content. Further content appointments are anticipated in the faculty hiring plan.

Alder reported that its faculty have authored various papers, attended conferences, and participated in scholarly engagement. The team found the caliber of conferences and presentations, such as the American Educational Research Association, to be in line with expectations of graduate faculty in a school of education. Alder's website research page highlights these scholarly ventures. Clearly, Alder is positioning itself as an institution with a culture of scholarship, that compares credibly with other graduate schools of education.

Alder's faculty committee has designed and approved expectations for faculty scholarship in an effort to define its culture of scholarship. Its academic affairs committee has ratified those revised expectations. Faculty have engaged in a variety of other endeavors around

research. During the visit, two separate teams of faculty members described research efforts in the area of co-teaching, both in general education contexts and in general education/special education collaborations. Faculty also described efforts to engage K-12 partners authentically in research by seeking to understand the unique challenges and questions that their educational partners are facing.

Alder has made significant strides toward the creation of a standing subcommittee for hiring, firing, promotion and evaluation of teaching faculty. While Alder has outlined expectations for faculty (Attachment 2.08 -Alder Faculty Framework and Research Expectations), the team recommends further development of a more formalized process for faculty evaluation according to teaching scholarship, student learning and service, with on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of this framework.

### **CFR 2.13 Appropriate student support services planned, implemented, and evaluated**

The Commission action letter encouraged Alder to establish dedicated academic support and student services to meet the specific types of students the institution serves and programs it offers.

Since SAV1, Alder has allocated significant resources and effort to both document and expand its student services program. Alder provided a map of benchmark services instrumental in identifying the strengths and gaps of Alder's student service offerings. Alder detailed improvements and expansion of its student services. Principal components include: services for students with disabilities, academic support services, health and wellness, financial aid, library, and career development and placement. During the visit, the team learned Alder's ticket system for students making requests for student services support. Response times to these requests are tracked and analyzed, to ensure that Alder's "high touch" culture is codified as the institution

grows and develops. During the visit, the team learned from students about the significant investment of time and effort that faculty make to ensure that students grow and succeed. It was evident to the team that Alder continuously strives to meet various student needs and is committed to the success of all students.

### **Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability**

The team finds Alder demonstrated evidence of overall compliance with Standard 3 at a level sufficient for Initial Accreditation, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination.

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

The Commission action letter encouraged Alder to provide an update on the number of courses taught by faculty with terminal degrees and to continue to attract faculty from diverse backgrounds to match the diversity of the student population. Since SAV1, Alder responded assertively to faculty credentials and has hired six new full-time faculty with doctoral degrees, five of whom teach courses. The percentage of courses taught by faculty who hold doctorates has also increased from 60% in FY 2017-2018 to 71% this year, which compares favorably with three peer institutions against which Alder benchmarked its faculty credentials.

Alder now uses a course team approach to ensure that faculty members who hold complementary skill and experience sets, including those who hold doctoral degrees, work together to create powerful learning experiences for students.

As mentioned above, the Alder faculty committee developed and approved expectations for faculty scholarship at various faculty levels and designations. The committee also established

for course criteria to ensure that doctoral-level faculty are teaching the most significant courses in the program.

Alder has improved the diversity of its faculty to better reflect the diverse makeup of its students with an overall minority-majority faculty and staff composition.

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

The Commission action letter encouraged Alder to provide an update on the transition from a philanthropy-based revenue stream to a tuition-based revenue stream through increasing partnerships and enrollment. The school's financial plan is well-documented and includes mitigation strategies in the event of enrollment shortfalls.

Alder's plan to transition to student tuition as its main stream of revenue is based on several expectations:

- Accreditation and Tuition Sharing: Alder expects to be fully accredited by the WSCUC and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing by 2020-2021 at which point it will no longer be required to share tuition revenue with Pacific.
- Partnership Agreements: Alder projects 68% annual growth in resident enrollment over the next four years. It pins this expectation on its ability to sign agreements with 15 school districts and charter management organizations (CMOs) over the next four years (41.7% annual growth), each of whom will be responsible for recruiting 20 new students per year.

Since the last review, Alder has signed agreements with 10 district partners or CMOs who are recruiting for academic year 2019-2020 (8 signed since the WSCUC review in 2017); 4 partners are hosting residents in 2018-2019. Alder has obtained letters of intent from two other partners.

Alder recognizes that its growth plans are exceedingly ambitious expectations and has identified a number of possible ways to mitigate the risk of falling short of its expectations:

- Tuition rates: Alder believes there is room to increase the tuition rate charged to residents if actual enrollment falls short of plan.
- Philanthropy: Drawing on its past success in philanthropy, Alder believes it can offset possible enrollment shortfalls by increasing outside gifts and grants. The school has hired a contractor to provide development support.
- State funding: Alder is hopeful of tapping into State of California funding to establish teacher residency programs.
- Online courses: Alder believes it could supplement tuition by offering online master's degree programs or professional development courses.
- Expense reductions: If enrollment lags, Alder expects it would have opportunities to reduce costs in line with lower revenues. Reductions could include the amounts Alder plans to pay to partners for imbedded directors' salaries.

Alder has developed a plan that lays out objectives, activities, and target metrics, in support of Alder's goals for enrollment, completion, and diversity. The plan is detailed and comprehensive. It identifies five goals to achieve enrollment success including:

- Partner recruitment and support
- Candidate recruitment
- Admissions
- Enrollment and Registration
- Academic support and student success.

The team commends Alder for its 64% increase in enrollment in 2018-2019, exceeding its SAV1 projection. Alder's enrollment management plan is tightly integrated with its strategy to recruit and educate teachers that reflect the communities in which the schools are situated. The institution's plan is tailored to its unique "high touch" culture of relationship-building that has proved to be effective in their building capacity.

**CFR 3.5 Facilities, services, information and technology resources sufficient and aligned with objectives**

The Commission action letter encouraged Alder to provide an update on the status of staffing for services, facilities, and resources to support planned enrollment growth and the institution has demonstrated its ability to provide more services associated with being a graduate school independent from Pacific. Alder's plan is feasible and attainable by 2020-21.

Staffing

Alder has added 13 positions since FY 2017-18 and has increased its staff FTE from 10.6 to 19.7. By FY 2021-22, Alder projects FTE will grow to 26.8. Since SAV1, Alder has added a senior IR officer, registrar, an instructional and research librarian, partnership development managers, student recruitment managers, an associate dean, and an enrollment specialist. It plans to hire a director of financial aid and a database specialist in FY2018-19.

Each of these positions is essential to implement the transition to independence from Pacific.

Through FY 2022-2023, Alder plans to hire additional staff in line with enrollment growth, keeping it below the student-to-staff ratio midpoint among private non-profit institutions, as measured by the US Department of Education.

Library

Alder has hired a .2 FTE instructional and research librarian who will manage Alder's in-house library materials and provide research and writing support for residents. Alder's library

collection includes two online services: Overdrive Library, an online database of digital resources; and the Statewide California Electronic Library Consortium collection, now that the part-time librarian is on board. The institution expects the research librarian and its online collection will sufficiently meet the research and writing needs of both residents and faculty.

### Technology

Alder's technology appears adequate to support the school when it gains independence from Pacific. The school provides students, faculty, and staff with laptop computers to function within Alder's reliance on online teaching, meeting, training, and counseling.

### Facilities

Alder believes its business model requires it to own or lease less real property than other graduate schools. With the exception of office space in Redwood City for about half its administrative staff, Alder does not anticipate the need to acquire classroom or office space. Half of Alder's staff work from home, conducting meetings via video-conference software. Alder will own no classroom or meeting space for students. Instead, in-person sessions with residents will happen at partner locations in their geographic regions. To ensure success, the team recommends that Alder develop a detailed facilities plan for on-site student course intensives in their distributed model, taking into account potential culture shifts that may occur when students no longer gather at one location for course intensives.

### **CFR 3.8 Full-time CEO and full-time CFO; sufficient qualified administrators**

The Commission action letter encouraged Alder to describe how professional services and activities currently provided by the University of the Pacific are being carried out by Alder faculty, staff, and administrators. As aforementioned, Alder has outlined how services and activities are allocated between Alder and Pacific in recruitment, admissions, enrollment support,

academic program, faculty development, student services, library services, career services, and financial aid. In curriculum review, library services, and financial aid, Alder still depends largely on Pacific, although it has begun to develop their own independent capability in these areas.

### **CFR 3.10 Effective academic leadership by faculty**

The Commission action letter encouraged Alder to develop a shared governance structure that engages faculty and is well-aligned with the mission and vision. In response to the Commission's recommendation, Alder formed a shared governance committee to benchmark similar institutions, explore the purpose and possibilities of shared governance, and establish a formal shared governance structure at Alder.

Under the new structure, all faculty assemble twice annually to cast votes for the chairs of the two academic committees and to approve changes to Alder's programs and SLOs. Faculty are well-represented on the academic program committee and on the faculty hiring, development, and evaluation committees. Faculty also serve on the following governing committees: diversity, equity, and inclusion, strategic planning, student services, recruiting and admissions, administrative hiring development and evaluation, and 403b plan investments. While Alder's shared governance structure has given its faculty a meaningful voice in academic affairs, the team recommends the institution continue to refine how decisions are made within its shared governance model to ensure clarity in roles, rights, and responsibilities.

### **Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement**

The team finds Alder demonstrated evidence of overall compliance with Standard 4 at a level sufficient for Initial Accreditation, recognizing that only the WSCUC Commission can make a final determination.

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

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

The Commission action letter encouraged Alder to continue to develop quality assurance processes including the use of comparative data, collection of robust student level data, and the dissemination of results to help inform decision-making and to develop a dedicated IR function with a viable IR agenda to include student-level information on academic achievement, enrollment, and student satisfaction with a repository of data for decision-making.

Since the SAV1, Alder has invested in notable resources to build an organization that has quality assurance processes in place, expanded their IR capacity, and has begun to demonstrate ongoing practices to support institutional learning and improvement. Within the past year, an IR office was established under the leadership of a newly hired and well-qualified senior institutional research officer. The IR office is also supported by a contracted database specialist. The IR office has developed a clear mission statement that aligns with the work and capacity of the office to “enable a culture for data-driven decision-making and improved institutional effectiveness” and has framed their work within four core functional areas: planning and evaluation for improved institutional effectiveness; external and internal report; data strategy, data management, and data delivery support; and research and development studies (Attachment 1.2-G Mission of Institutional Research Office).

Through the establishment of an IR office with well-aligned mission, purpose, and staff, Alder has expanded its capacity to regularly collect data from both academic and non-academic areas throughout the year and use data to inform practices. The IR office designed and started Alder Impact Measures (AIM), a central student data warehouse, that includes current and

historical data on student admissions, enrollment, and outcomes. While AIM is currently in pilot mode with phase one rolled out and phase two, on its way, that includes academic program assessment data and teacher effectiveness data. Alder's IR office provided a clear plan for staggered implementation in place. The team recommends that the IR office and the data management council continue their plans to pilot and test AIM to ensure that all data is being used effectively in planning and decision making.

Overall, during the SAV2, Alder faculty and staff communicated their overwhelming excitement for this new IR office and the potential for better decision making and clear quality assurance indicators with this new centralized data warehouse. The team commends the progress that has been made in this area.

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

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

The Commission action letter encouraged Alder to implement widespread faculty engagement with and ownership of academic program assessment and use the results of the assessment to inform practice and to continue to engage in inquiry into the processes of teaching and learning, and the conditions and practices that ensure that the standards of performance established by the institution are being achieved.

In response to these two CFRs, Alder's IR office has developed clear strategic plans to collect, track, and analyze data. The institutional narrative report highlighted plans for collecting internal data to improve student outcomes and conduct annual collection for program assessments (Attachment 1.2 B: Program Assessment Plan). In addition, Alder leadership has reviewed and revised the previous program assessment plan to ensure broader participation from

faculty and other stakeholders. The institution posts student outcomes achievement, the impact of its residency program, and completion data on its website, making data transparent to its publics.

As the IR office continues to build and expand, Alder has demonstrated how it uses data for institutional learning and improvement. Faculty hold data talks regularly to examine master's orals and improve student learning. The faculty also engage with one another during the summer to analyze student project data and plan curricular changes. To ensure that Alder faculty are equipped to operationalize Alder's vision for teaching and learning and that standards and expectations are being met, the faculty's academic program committee and the board's academic affairs committee developed and approved a course review process (Attachment 2.01-H Alder Course Development and Review Process). [CFRs 4.4 and 4.6]

Alder's faculty engage in an ongoing inquiry into teaching and learning to improve curricula and pedagogy. Faculty participate in "Data Talk" conference calls throughout the year to examine course data and student performance and discuss surrounding topics such as strengths and challenges in existing assignment rubrics or alignment of SLOs to PLOs. Alder continues these data talks into the summer with the goal of growing as a committed body of educators.

The team found the ongoing inquiry and posture toward improvement based on faculty engagement and a commitment to utilizing data to be a growing strength of Alder's Graduate School of Education.

**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**

The Commission action letter encouraged Alder to expand current strategic planning efforts to connect to the operating budget process and include regularly monitored, specific, and measurable indicators, relying upon appropriate data analyses.

The team found that Alder’s strategic plan clearly outlines its goals and objectives. And that the plan’s key metrics are sufficient to track progress, support planning strategies, and ensure institutional effectiveness (Attachment 1.5-B: Strategic Plan Implementation Plan). Since SAV1, Alder has deepened its commitment to the strategic planning process by expanding the committee to include more staff, faculty, and alumni, in addition to board members, and including input from all faculty and staff members (Attachment 4.6-A: Strategic Planning Committee Charge). The IR office was involved in the strategic planning process, dedicated financial resources have been established to support the work of the strategic planning committee, and operational benchmarks have been adequately set forth. In addition, Alder has developed a detailed implementation plan that includes key metrics and is closely tied to budget.

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

#### **FINDINGS**

The team reviewed a wide array of direct evidence to determine Alder’s progress and alignment with WSCUC standards of accreditation. Throughout the many SAV2 meetings with administrators, faculty, staff, board members, alumni, and students, the team observed a total transformation in response to the Commission Action Letter after the SAV1. Alder has a deep commitment to their mission of preparing diverse students for work in schools in underserved communities. The board and school leadership are exemplary and have developed systems and hired leaders to establish Alder as an independent institution. The team found Alder Graduate School of Education met all four Standards at a level of Initial Accreditation, recognizing that only the Commission can make the final determination. Below are the team’s commendations and recommendations:

## COMMENDATIONS

The team has the following six commendations for Alder Graduate School of Education:

1. An impressive, deliberate, and thorough response at every level since SAV1 to all recommendations.
2. Enthusiasm, pride, and passion for the mission of the institution and the impact on the community.
3. A leadership team that has infused throughout Alder, a systemic approach to change, including problem identification, benchmarking, system implementation, measurement, and feedback.
4. A board of trustees with an enviable level of skill, background, and engagement.
5. An expansion of staff and doctoral-level faculty that positions Alder well for growth.
6. Exceeding expectations for partnership development, enrollment, and fundraising

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue to build the infrastructure to enable Alder to be an independent institution.  
[CFR 1.5]
2. Deepen formative assessment practices, including opportunities for students to self-assess and receive iterative instructor feedback to ensure mastery [CFR 2.6]
3. Building on the clarification of faculty framework for teaching and scholarship expectations, continue to operationalize the faculty evaluation system that links teaching, scholarship, and service [CFR 2.9]
4. Develop a detailed facilities plan for on-site student course intensives in a new distributed model [CFR 3.5]

5. Continue to refine how decisions are made within shared governance to clarify roles, rights and responsibilities [CFR 3.7]
6. Continue the next phase of the Alder Impact Measures to include data from academic program assessment [CFRs 4.2 and 4.4]