

REPORT OF THE WSCUC VISITING TEAM
SEEKING ACCREDITATION VISIT 2

New York Film Academy

April 3-5, 2019

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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

The New York Film Academy (NYFA) was founded by a film producer in 1992. It was incorporated as a Subchapter S Corporation with headquarters in New York City. With the title of Director, the founder/owner functioned as the president and CEO, with his son as the owner. At the establishment of the institution, the current president/CEO served with the title of deputy director. During its initial years 1992-1999, the Academy offered intensive filmmaking and acting workshops of four to eight weeks in New York City, Los Angeles (at UCLA), Harvard University, Princeton University, Yale University, Cambridge and Oxford Universities, the Sorbonne, The American University of Paris, University of Florence, and Disney Studios in Florida. The popularity of these programs led to the development of one-year programs in the year 2000.

In 2006, NYFA was accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), its current designated institutional accreditor per U.S. Department of Education Title IV participation requirements. From 2006 to 2015, the institution successfully gained degree granting authority for its Los Angeles campus; diversified its curricular offerings; established branch campuses in Abu Dhabi, Queensland, Sydney, and Miami; and expanded its global reach by holding workshops in cities including Beijing, Mumbai, Lagos, and Rio.

During this time, the Los Angeles location became the first NYFA campus to offer degree-granting programs (undergraduate and graduate), and grew to be the largest campus in terms of enrollment, faculty, offerings, and physical plant. By 2010, the Los Angeles campus became the official main campus and all others denoted as branch campuses, as recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and NASAD.

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Since the WSCUC team last reviewed New York Film Academy in November 2017, several developments have occurred. These are detailed in the institution's Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 Report, but some highlights are worth noting here:

- In December of 2018, the New York campus of New York Film Academy was granted degree-granting authority by the New York State Board of Regents. This development is a major component of NYFA's strategic plan and will allow for greater opportunities for prospective first-time and transfer students.
- NYFA's dean of the college and the vice president, institutional research and effectiveness, graduated from the 9th cohort of the WSCUC Assessment Leadership Academy.
- NYFA introduced and grew its study abroad offerings, welcoming 53 students from American colleges and universities, including Brown University, Vassar College, UC Santa Cruz, Texas A&M, SUNY Purchase, George Washington University, and UC Berkeley.
- NYFA expanded its board of directors and amended its bylaws and Governance Policy Manual to clarify its role and relationship to ownership.
- NYFA hired a new dean of students and Title IX coordinator in Los Angeles, and created and hired a new position of director of student life.
- Academic assessment and program review have continued, and a new regimen of co-curricular assessment has rolled out.
- New task forces and committees were created which developed many new policies, procedures, and implementation documents.

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- Structural changes were created to address issues around decision-making and lines of reporting.
- The Sydney, Australia, campus was put on hiatus while NYFA applies for higher education status in Australia. The Gold Coast, Australia, campus continues to offer programs.
- The Miami campus saw accelerated gains in enrollment beyond targets.

Currently, the New York Film Academy's home campus in Los Angeles, CA has 78 full-time and 249 part-time faculty; 1354 students (as of fall 2018) of which 1222 are enrolled in degree programs and 132 in certificate programs. In addition, 550 unique students attended adult Community Education Programs during 2017-18. The home campus offers nine M.F.A., three M.A., 11 B.F.A., and one B.A. program.

The team convened the evening of Tuesday, April 2, 2019. Meetings with individuals and groups from the New York Film Academy took place April 3 and April 4. The exit meeting occurred during the morning of April 5.

B. The Institution's Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 Report: Quality of the Report and Evidence

The team found the report to be thorough and responsive to the issues raised and the recommendations made during the team's first visit. Extensive descriptive and empirical information were provided in the report through a large number of individualized appendices, allowing given information to be more easily located and identified.

NYFA's preparation of the report involved the widespread involvement of a full range of constituencies including faculty, administrative staff, students and others as appropriate. Internal and external stakeholders engaged in what was described by NYFA as a "rewarding process" of reflection, analysis, planning, and implementation, one in which "the school has been able to

understand better where it is, where it would like to be, and what it must do to get there.” Since the SAV1, the school established several new bodies including the Enrollment Management Task Force, the Strategic Plan Committee, and the Diversity and Gender Balance Task Force.

C. Response to Issues Raised in the Past Commission Letter

1. *Document and widely share key academic and operational processes and procedures, such as program review guidelines, budget policies, due process, and committee charters. (CFRs 1.6, 1.7)*

The Committee for Academic Planning and Policy has been granted the authority to plan, review, and propose policies for the institution. The committee’s mission, responsibilities/powers, membership, and procedures were articulated in their newly formed bylaws.

The institution created a national level and campus-specific organizational charts to clarify reporting lines. Developing job descriptions and documenting additional processes for - making is a next step for the institution. The team found that some faculty were less familiar with organizational changes within the clarified structure.

An Enrollment Management Task Force was assembled and oversaw a SWOT survey and analysis resulting in the creation of seven subcommittees. Goals of the subcommittees and overarching task force were to establish clear enrollment targets, promote student success, review quality of programs, and increase organizational efficiency. During its recent visit, the team found that work done by the subcommittees provided transparency in operations and enabled employees to better understand how other areas across the institution operated.

NYFA has formalized its academic policies and processes. It has refined its infrastructure in a manner that provides its constituencies with a clear understanding of educational objectives. In summary, the institution has made important progress since the SAV1 visit.

- 2. Build a strong assessment program that provides NYFA with evidence of the effectiveness of its curricular and co-curricular programs and documents student performance and success. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.11, 4.1, 4.2)*

In the last few years, NYFA has put a great deal of effort into building its assessment capacity for both curricular and co-curricular programs with guidance and support from the office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IRE). Moreover, the vice presidents of academic affairs and IRE recently completed WSCUC's Assessment Leadership Academy and are applying critical knowledge gained from this professional experience to strengthen the assessment of student learning and success at NYFA. The team was impressed with NYFA's advancement in assessment strategies at all levels as indicated below in Standards 2 and 4 of this report.

- 3. Continue efforts to support the success of international students by elevating their English language proficiency and enhancing their ability to engage fully in their academic and social experiences. Continue efforts to develop the intercultural skills that students, faculty, and staff need to participate in a diverse community. (CFR 2.13)*

Since the last visit, NYFA has improved language support to non-native speakers of English offering tutoring through the Language and Writing Resource Center (also known as the Writing Center). NYFA now requires that writing tutors hold TESOL certification and has replaced its previous exam, Accuplacer, with WritePlacer to more accurately assess students' written skills in English. Moreover, students now enter into written agreements to receive tutoring to meet performance expectations and work consistently toward proficiency goals. Faculty-led conversation groups have been developed to improve oral communication of international students. Limited English proficiency of some international students continues to be an important issue for NYFA, particularly in degree programs that require more advanced oral and written English communication skills.

NYFA's Council on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning help raise awareness of and appreciation for cultural differences and expectations. NYFA is proud to be a diverse, vibrant, international community and continues to seek ways to improve appreciation of diversity among faculty, staff and students.

4. *Develop written financial policies that anticipate changing environmental conditions and promote fiscal sustainability. (CFR 3.4)*

The institution has developed a financial sustainability policy that addresses this recommendation. This recommendation and the institution's response are fully discussed in Standard 3 of this report.

5. *Ensure that institutional libraries are adequately resourced (space, staff, holdings, databases) to support academic programs. (CFR 3.5)*

Since the SAV1 visit, additional space near the Acting Department's academic area and additional electronic data bases were added. Additionally, faculty reported they had enough library resources for their programs. This recommendation and the institution's response are fully discussed in Standard 3 of this report.

6. *Document and widely share key academic and operational processes and procedures, such as program review guidelines, budget policies, due process, and committee charters. (CFR 3.7)*

Since SAV1, NYFA has strengthened decision-making processes by revising its organizational structure and simplifying reporting lines to reduce dual reporting. New organization charts were available at the visit, and the team reviewed these in detail with management.

NYFA's catalog, handbooks, and other publicly available materials contain detailed information about operational processes and procedures. NYFA also has internal policies on program review and guidance on assessment processes, a recently updated budget process, and

employee evaluation and grievance processes. These are solid foundational documents that can contribute to institutional effectiveness. The Committee on Academic Planning and Policy (CAPP) is responsible for policy development and is continually developing new and revising existing policies as necessary. New policies developed in 2018 focused primarily on student and compliance issues, including attendance and readmission.

The implementation of a more widely shared and clear budgeting process is also an important step in strengthening a culture of transparency and shared responsibility. NYFA has also made progress in this regard; departments stated that they had budgets and budget authority, and changes in strengthening this process were positive.

7. Clarify the respective titles and roles of NYFA's senior leadership, in particular the CEO, president, and provost. (CFR 3.8)

In discussing the title, fiscal relationships, and roles of the "principal" (see below), it is to be noted that the New York Film Academy was formed as a Subchapter S corporation and remains so today. The son of the founder is the sole owner. During the team's first visit, the owner was identified as the CEO with another individual designated as the president and provost.

A number of things have changed with regard to these titles and roles. The owner no longer has the title of CEO but is now the "owner" and "principal," both accurate. He is a member of the New York Film Academy's board of directors. The president is the president and CEO. The president reports to the board of directors. The board's bylaws specify that the money transferred in any fiscal year to the owner is limited each year to the percentage of the year's operating surplus specified in the sustainability plan, until such time as the operating reserves are equal or exceed an amount consistent with commonly recommended levels (as discussed elsewhere in this report). Any deviation from this would require approval of the board of directors. (It should be noted that by virtue of Chapter S status of New York Film

Academy, the owner is responsible for income taxes on the net of net operating funds. During the period since the team's first visit, the owner has taken no money out of the New York Film Academy with the express desire for the reserve funds of the institution to reach the desired level as quickly as possible. In the past, the owner has in some years put money into the New York Film Academy to cover desired expenditures.)

The president oversees the chief operating officer (who also has the title senior vice president), the chief financial officer, the vice president of academic affairs, the vice president of business development, the vice president for strategic initiatives, and the senior vice president of administration. There is an inevitable and appropriate amount of matrix management in coordinating the main and the branch campuses, which seemed to the team to be characterized by much communication and efforts at coordination. The team believes the titles and roles of the senior management are much more clearly and explicitly set forth, and appropriate for the New York Film Academy at this stage of its evolution.

8. *Examine the WSCUC "Governing Board Policy" and the "Governing Board Policy Implementation Guide" in light of NYFA bylaws and make the necessary changes to bring the institution into compliance. (CFR 3.9)*

The institution has made significant positive changes to its governing board to align with WSCUC policies. This recommendation and the institution's response are discussed in Standard 3 of this report.

9. *Strengthen the formal shared governance structure that engages faculty and is aligned with NYFA's mission and vision. (CFR 3.10)*

Faculty at NYFA are engaged in all aspects of curriculum development and assessment processes, academic program review, and participate in reviewing the curriculum annually prior to publication in the catalog. Faculty members are active on standing and *ad hoc* committees

and task forces such as the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council, the Enrollment Management Task Force, and the Diversity and Gender Balance Task force.

A faculty senate has been in existence at NYFA since 2016. The senate has four officers and all other faculty, full and part-time, may participate as a committee of the whole. The senate is currently focused on addressing issues of importance to faculty, including compensation and aspects of the teaching and learning environment. Other activities of the senate include the development of a Judiciary Committee to ensure due process for faculty, additional rubrics related to faculty workload, and the development of an institutional food pantry to assist students facing food insecurities. Many faculty members are taking an active role in academic and related matters at the institution and their activity and influence appear to be growing. (CFR 3.10)

SECTION II. EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE WITH WSCUC'S STANDARDS AND IDENTIFIED CFRs FROM THE PRIOR SEEKING ACCREDITATION VISIT

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Education Objectives

Integrity & Transparency (CFRs 1.6, 1.7)

The academic goals of the institution, services, programs, and costs are readily available on the website and in the Student Handbook. The institution provides appropriate disclosures related to its accreditation status on the website and in its marketing materials. Information on confidentiality of student records as well as policies and procedures on student conduct, grievances, disabilities, and financial matters, including refunds and financial aid, are also included in the Student Handbook. The institution has been implementing a new case management system, Maxient, which is scheduled to be in use spring 2019. The institution's website also contains gainful employment information.

Accommodations are available through the Office of Accessibility Services. The grading policy is published in the academic catalog along with the appeal process. Student fees and information on financial aid and refunds are published on the website.

The institution appears to exhibit integrity and transparency in its operations. Its website is comprehensive in providing information about the institution and includes handbooks articulating policies and grievance procedures for students, faculty, and staff. The institution has an audit conducted annually by a qualified independent auditor showing a strong history of financial stability.

The Committee for Academic Planning and Policy has been charged with planning, reviewing, and proposing policies for the institution. The committee's mission, responsibilities/powers, membership, and procedures were articulated in their newly formed bylaws.

The institution created a national level and campus-specific organizational charts to clarify reporting lines. In interviews with faculty, staff, and administration, the team found that the creation and sharing of the organizational charts clarified and provided operational transparency of lines of authority and decision-making processes. The team encourages NYFA to continue to develop job descriptions and document additional processes for decision-making.

The NYFA president assembled an Enrollment Management Task Force, which oversaw a SWOT survey and analysis. Based on the results of the SWOT analysis, seven subcommittees were formed to look at professional experience, curricular offerings, data management, student success, policies and procedures, recruitment and admissions standards, and public relations. The goal of the subcommittees and overarching task force was to establish clear enrollment goals, promote student success, review quality of programs, and increase organizational efficiency. The subcommittees provide transparency in operations and enable employees to understand how

other offices across the institution operate. As the institution continues to document and widely share key academic and operational policies and procedures, the team recommends that the institution improve communication strategies, and, after stakeholders have had the opportunity to provide appropriate input into decisions, ensure that important matters are shared with the community in a timely manner. (CFRs 1.7, 3.6, 3.7)

Balancing a goal to increase enrollments while ensuring that qualified students are admitted to appropriate programs was articulated in the institutional report and repeatedly mentioned during the team's interviews. NYFA has selected a management model in which the departments for recruitment and admission are housed under separate vice presidents, each located in a different geographic area. With a new cohort of students beginning each fall, spring, and summer semesters, the cycle of recruitment and admissions is continuous. Thus, the team recommends that the institution continue to evaluate and improve recruitment and admissions structures and practices to ensure new student enrollment goals are attained with students capable of completing their chosen programs. (CFRs 1.7, 3.7)

NYFA has admissions policies pertaining to English language proficiency standards. With roughly a 60% international student population, concerns about the students' English language proficiency were expressed in the team's interviews. The Enrollment Management Task Force's Recruitment and Admissions Standards Subcommittee has begun to evaluate admissions policies and practices and propose a recommendation to the president. The team recommends that the institution examine and modify English language proficiency standards and support services to enable admitted students to be successful in their chosen programs and consistently meet student learning outcomes. (CFRs 1.6, 1.7, 2.6, 2.13)

NYFA expanded its board of directors and amended its bylaws and Governance Policy Manual to clarify the board's role and relationship to the owner. The board implemented an

annual president's performance review process. The chair of the faculty senate holds membership on several institutional committees. The faculty senate serves as the official mechanism and liaison with the administration regarding institutional policies and procedures. Senate officers meet monthly with NYFA's senior administration to address topics arising from senate meetings.

NYFA has formalized its academic policies and processes. It has refined its infrastructure in a manner that provides its constituencies with a clear understanding of educational objectives. In summary, the institution has made important progress since the SAVI visit.

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that NYFA has presented sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 1 that is required for initial accreditation.

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

Teaching & Learning (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.6)

For the last few years, NYFA has worked diligently on all aspects of its assessment agenda for both co-curricular and curricular purposes. Its commitment to this important goal of building a complete assessment program is clearly evident and is commended later in this report. A number of factors contributed to NYFA's ability to strengthen its practices, including hiring a vice-president of institutional research and effectiveness, consulting with assessment experts, sending two of its administrators to WSCUC's Assessment Leadership Academy, participating in workshops and professional conferences such as the Academic Resource Conference, including teams of faculty, staff, and students in assessment activities, and offering trainings for academic and student services units. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.6)

The result is that NYFA is well on its way to having a strong assessment program that can inform campus stakeholders about what works well and what needs modification. Moreover, the institution can determine how resources should be allocated with greater accuracy. Clear

learning goals and performance standards are examined by faculty curriculum committees each spring, leading to updating of the catalog each fall. Faculty and department chairs work collaboratively to develop program level outcomes, produce curricular maps, and modify syllabi as needed for greater student learning and development. Moreover, the newly opened Center for Excellence in Teaching offers numerous services and workshops to support teaching and build learning communities among faculty members. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.6)

The team examined numerous documents that provided evidence of best practices in assessment, particularly the Institutional Assessment Handbook and the Co-Curricular Assessment Plan, the latter of which was carefully scrutinized and approved by assessment leaders at the Assessment Leadership Academy. The team also reviewed well-crafted annual learning outcomes for Written and Oral Communication and Professionalism, and notably the syllabi for Screenwriting and the MFA in Photography. (CFR 2.3)

NYFA is now poised to take assessment to the next level by engaging in more practices to “close the loop” or use assessment findings to improve programs and student success. The institution has already started this by using program review results of Professionalism and Oral Communication to make curricular changes. Results of the library’s program review suggested that acting students were underutilizing resources; NYFA then added a small library annex to the building where acting students take their classes. These are precisely the kinds of revisions that NYFA should continue to make as the institution uncovers more evidence of student achievement and success. Since NYFA is nearly half way through its five-year assessment plan, one can expect much more data to emerge in the upcoming years that will drive decision-making. Furthermore, the institution can sharpen its efforts to disaggregate data for diverse cohorts as indicators of student success and make these data transparent and easy to discover. (CFR 2.6)

Student Learning & Success (CFRs 2.11, 2.13)

NYFA provides comprehensive student services, including student advising, financial aid, international student services, veteran's services, accessibility services, career development and industry outreach services, housing, athletics, student life, new student orientation, counseling, and academic support services. Departments are led by knowledgeable staff who have specific training for their responsibilities and participate in professional development opportunities to ensure their knowledge and skills remain current.

NYFA is currently finalizing plans to assess newly developed co-curricular learning outcomes (CCLOs). This assessment and evaluation process will help the institution make data-driven decisions to improve services to students while supporting student academic success. This process is in its early stages as the Institutional Research and Effectiveness office is introducing departments and staff to the concepts of co-curricular assessment. In the long run, this process will be an important part of NYFA's assessment activities. NYFA's co-curricular assessment plans are especially impressive as they use frameworks of the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) and are directly connected to NYFA's academic program. The hiring of a new dean of students and a new director of student life shows NYFA's commitment to student support services designed to help students succeed, especially in practical competence and cultural appreciation and awareness. In particular, the dean of students is responsible for all areas of student life, including specific needs of students who are non-native English speakers, such as engaging them in on-campus activities to improve their English proficiency and support their academic success. (CFRs 2.11, 2.13)

Academic support services, primarily writing support services, are provided through the Writing Center. The Writing Center provides tutoring and consultation on writing techniques and grammar; it also administers the WritePlacer Exam. A small staff is working to support a large number of students, some of whom use the center regularly and others who use it once or twice a

semester. To improve services to non-native English speakers, tutors are now required to have TESOL certification. The program review for the Writing Center provided several important recommendations, including the need for designated space for tutoring. The team concurs and recommends that NYFA provide physical space for the confidential interviewing, tutoring, and advising of prospective and current students. NYFA has begun to address this this by providing a classroom that is available for half of the Writing Center's hours.

One of the seven areas of focus of the Enrollment Management Task Force is student success. The subcommittee looking at this issue is proposing establishment of a Mental Health and Wellness Task Force to address student wellness, expanded tutoring services, training for faculty that would focus on student referrals to services, and student events that would promote student engagement and strengthen student peer support networks. The team sees these proposed efforts as very positive.

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that NYFA has presented sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 2 that is required for initial accreditation.

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

Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources (CFRs 3.4, 3.5)

The Commission Action Letter stated the following: "Develop written financial policies that anticipate changing environmental conditions and promote fiscal sustainability." Since the SAV1, the institution has developed two policies, including a budget preparation policy and a financial sustainability policy entitled "Financial Sustainability Plan," providing guidance for achieving and maintaining financial sustainability. The policy contains several key elements, namely prudent budgeting, maintaining a budget contingency for revenue shortfalls, further diversification of revenues, capital investments framed by NYFA's depreciation costs, and

attainment of a Primary Reserve Ratio goal. The team found that the institution has developed the financial policies as stated in the Commission Action Letter. The financial sustainability policy contains most, if not all, key principles for achieving and sustaining financial sustainability and the institution is commended for establishing this policy.

The goal of attaining a specified Primary Reserve Ratio as stated in the policy contains a *pro forma* forecast of achieving a set benchmark by 2022 by not allowing more than a specified percentage of the year's operating surplus to be distributed to the ownership until the Primary Reserve Ratio goal is attained. The policy also contains a revenue diversification plan to increase non-tuition revenues from 2017 levels. The team suggests a re-evaluation of the timing necessary to achieve its specified Primary Reserve Ratio, and the sufficiency of budgeted depreciation to meet the needs of the institution.

The team also noted that the institution often carries a large cash balance on its balance sheet, and while it has created the two well thought-out policies mentioned above, it has no policies in place for investing its cash balances, nor an institutional liquidity policy. The institution's large cash balances are now invested in money market instruments and could possibly be more prudently invested. Therefore, the team recommends that institution create additional financial policies for the management of the institution's cash balances while preserving sufficient levels of institutional liquidity. (CFR 3.4).

The Commission Action Letter recommended the following to ensure the institution has adequate library resources for the institution's current operations and future plans: "Ensure that institutional libraries are adequately resourced (space, staff, holdings, databases) to support academic programs." The institutional SAV2 report clearly described the holdings of the library, and the team noted that one new electronic database has been added- EBSCO's eBook Academic Collection (over 170,000 volumes). This was an important addition, but the library still lacks

enough space to significantly add to its physical holdings, nor does it adequately support the acting and photography programs with program specific content. However, meetings with the chairs of the academic programs at the Los Angeles campus indicated that the faculty believe the resources are sufficient for the work of the faculty and students.

Since the SAV1 visit, the Acting Department had a small auxiliary library added due to findings from the library program review, and this appears to have increased library use by acting students. Also, one new professional librarian was added to serve students. While the team recognizes improvements made to the library, it also continues to believe more resources are required to support growing program requirements. Therefore, the team recommends that the institution improve institutional libraries so they are adequately resourced to support academic programs. (CFR 3.5).

During the visit, the team met with several departments that provided advising for prospective and current students as well as parents. In almost each case, the team learned that due to lack of space these actions often had to be conducted in public or semi-public areas. For example, the admissions staff reported that due to lack of private spaces, student interviews were conducted in areas in locations where the conversations could be heard by others. As stated previously in this report, Writing Center tutors likewise often had to tutor students in public areas, and they felt that this caused some students needing their service to not seek their help. All in all, private conversations should be conducted in spaces that offer the ability to have sensitive conversations conducted in a confidential manner. Therefore, the team recommends that NYFA provide adequate physical space for the confidential interviewing, tutoring, and advising of prospective and current students (CFR 3.5).

Organizational Structures & Decision-Making Processes (CFRs 3.7-3.10)

As stated before in this report, since SAV1, NYFA has made changes to position responsibilities, lines of authority, and titles resulting in a new organizational chart. The president was appointed CEO, clarifying that that president is the administrator responsible for management of the institution, including implementing the direction of the board of directors, providing oversight of the academic programs, ensuring appropriate provision of human and fiscal resources, developing and approving the institution's budget, ensuring adequacy of facilities, and implementing NYFA's strategic plan.. The owner now holds the position of principal. The principal is responsible for ensuring adequate funding for the institution and consulting on areas of such as risk management and institutional branding. The change in responsibilities results in the president rather than the principal being involved in details of institutional management. Revised institutional bylaws reflect the new titles and responsibilities.

Since the SAV1, NYFA has examined, revised, and streamlined its organizational structure to simplify it, eliminate most dual reporting, and establish a structure that will support future growth both in the U.S. and abroad. A new organizational chart clarifies both institutional and campus structures. The institutional structure involves key personnel responsible for strategy and operations, academic affairs, finance, institutional research and assessment, and general education. Each campus is headed by a dean to whom all campus personnel report, including academic personnel. The campus deans report to a senior executive vice president/COO who reports to the president. The institutional positions work in a collaborative way with the campus deans and department heads at the campuses.

A president's cabinet was created as an executive team to handle day-to-day decision-making. The cabinet includes 10 senior managers, including the vice presidents. These organizational changes were made within the last few months, and communication about the changes is in the early stages. New job descriptions that support the restructuring have recently

been developed for most of the senior positions. Some position descriptions are under development. Most members of the community are supportive of the changes since there is more clarity and transparency. Communication about changes will need to continue to make the institution fully aware of work issues that arise from the new structure. NYFA seems committed to making organizational changes and improving transparency around structures and decisions to strengthen and improve their operations. The institution also recognizes that the organization may need additional modification to resolve structures that are not effective or respond to institutional changes. Members of the community pointed to the strength of the assessment processes in promoting positive changes that will make an impact on the institution. This is particularly important with the recent approval to offer degree programs in New York State which has the potential to lead to a significant increase in enrollment and related institutional growth. This work of strengthening the organizational structure may be a change from NYFA's roots but will serve the institution for the future.

NYFA has policies, procedures and plans that inform the use of resources to sustain the institution, including the strategic plan, a budget process, and program review process. The 2018-2022 strategic plan identifies seven key goals and objectives to meet those goals. These goals include diversifying governance at the board and faculty levels, improving student retention and graduation rates, expanding educational offerings, and broadening international reach, among others. Budget projections have been developed out to 2022 to forecast resources available to sustain the institution.

NYFA is active in the initiation and development of committees, council, and other entities, generally with broad representation from campuses, administrative and academic departments, to tackle issues of importance to the institution. One significant example is the Enrollment Management Task Force which conducted a SWOT analysis of institutional issues

and created subcommittees to work on recruitment and admissions standards, data management, student success, curricular offerings, public relations, policies and procedures, and professional experience. The work of these committees and subcommittees then informs institutional policies and practices. The voice of the faculty is key to these committees and NYFA should continue to involve faculty as appropriate in committees charged with making recommendations that affect faculty, academic programs and the institution at large. (CFR 3.7)

In its SAVI report, the team further clarified issues that needed attention to conform to the WSCUC Governing Board Policy and the Governing Board Policy Implementation Guide.

These issues were:

- Clarification of the role of the president/CEO and the board of directors; for example, Article II, Section 3 of the bylaws most likely overstates the role of the president/CEO relative to the board of directors, especially in financial matters;
- Clarification of the roles of the CEO, the president, and the COO;
- Clarification of the full-time status of the president;
- The selection and evaluation process of the president;
- The limits of decision-making authority of the CEO, the president, the board of directors, and the faculty;
- The specific powers that are reserved for the stockholder;
- How and by whom distribution of profits is approved.

The team found these issues were clarified and are now contained in the board's bylaws as amended in October 2018. It was obvious that the institution seriously examined the WSCUC Governing Board Policy and the Governing Board Policy Implementation Guide in creating the revised bylaws. The following paragraphs examine how these revised bylaws match the 13 characteristics found in the WSCUC Implementation Guide's statements:

- ***Characteristic 1:*** *The chair and most board members are independent, meaning that they are not employed by the institution, are not compensated by the institution and do not have ownership of the institution.*
 - The institution has increased the size of the board to 12, with 10 being independent. The sole stockholder serves on the board of directors as does the CEO/president, both of whom are voting members.
- ***Characteristic 2:*** *Compensation for independent board members is modest, meaning it is not substantial enough to serve, or to remain on the board for the stipend.*
 - Board members are reimbursed for travel expenses but are not paid a stipend.
- ***Characteristic 3:*** *The governing board has a clear and published conflict of interest policy, annually signed by each member.*
 - The bylaws of NYFA have clearly stated conflict of interest policies, including the requirement to annually disclose, in written form, all potential and/or actual conflicts of interest. These forms are signed annually by governing board members.
- ***Characteristic 4:*** *Governing board members have relevant expertise that qualifies them to serve on the board.*
 - The qualifications of the 12-member board are quite impressive with members coming from various roles both within the entertainment industry, including financial, insurance, writing, directing, acting, and teaching/education, and from roles outside the industry. The Nomination Committee minutes provide evidence of careful and deliberate attention to identify and select members with needed expertise and experience.
- ***Characteristic 5:*** *Length of term of service is clearly defined and promotes continuity of independent members.*
 - Once elected, each member serves for three-year terms and may succeed themselves without limitation. The officers of the board, i.e., the chair, are also elected for a three-year term, and may be reelected.
- ***Characteristic 6:*** *The quorum of the board to conduct business is comprised of most independent members.*
 - A majority of the entire board must be present to constitute a quorum, and the majority of the present board members must be independent.
- ***Characteristic 7:*** *Governing boards will generally have at least four committees: finance, financial audit, academic affairs and nominations.*

- The NYFA board bylaws require the following committees: Executive Committee, Finance Committee, Academic Affairs Committee, Audit Committee, and Membership Nominating Committee. Additional committees may be added to by majority vote of the board of directors.
- **Characteristic 8:** *Board committees have a minimum of three members each, of which at least two of whom must be independent members, and the independent members must be in the majority.*
 - The NYFA board bylaws specify that each committee must have at least three members, and it further limits the number of members for each committee, most often seven, the Audit Committee being the exception with a limit of five. The chair of the Finance Committee and the president are specifically excluded from membership in the Audit Committee. Furthermore, the majority of each committee must be independent.
- **Characteristic 9:** *No one member may serve as chair for multiple committees.*
 - While the bylaws do not specifically prohibit this, in practice no one member serves as committee chair for more than one committee. One member, who serves as the vice chair, has chaired the board, in the absence of the chair, and chaired the Audit Committee during the same board meeting schedule; however, this was an exceptional case.
- **Characteristic 10:** *The governing board is of enough size so that all committees can be adequately populated by qualified members without concentrating too much control in a small number of people.*
 - In 2018 and early 2019 the size of the board increased to 12, thus allowing 3 members for each committee. From the minutes that were available for review prior to the visit, it appeared that enough members were present to allow a quorum of independent members.
- **Characteristic 11:** *The board has clear procedures to select, nominate remove and replace board members, conforming to the principles of independence.*
 - The bylaws clearly describe how board members are identified, vetted, nominated, and approved for board membership. Ultimately, one of the reserve powers for the stockholder is approval of all members; however, the nominating committee must nominate, and the board approve all members before consideration by the stockholder.
- **Characteristic 12:** *The board has clear procedures for hiring, evaluating, retaining, or discharging the CEO that conform to the principles of board independence and responsibilities.*

- The bylaws are clear that the board hires, evaluates, and if necessary, terminates the president/CEO. The exact procedures are more clearly laid out in the Board Governance Manual, and the team observed evidence that annual evaluations are being conducted. One of the reserve powers found in the Board Governance Manual is the requirement for the CEO to be approved by the stockholder; however, the bylaws do not contain this language.
- ***Characteristic 13: The powers of related entities do not significantly compromise the governing board's responsibilities and independence.***
 - The stockholder has retained the following reserve powers, approval of:
 - The annual budget for the college;
 - The purchase, management, or sale of any land or buildings;
 - The construction of new buildings and major renovations of existing buildings;
 - The incurrence of any debt by the college and securing thereof by mortgage or pledge of real and personal property, tangible and intangible; All non-budgeted, individual expenditures in excess of \$500,000;
 - Policy guidelines for all investments and major fundraising efforts of the college;
 - Changes to college tuition and fees greater than a 5% annual increase;
 - Any and all powers not enumerated in these bylaws shall rest with the shareholders, decided upon by a majority vote of shareholders.
 - The board's understanding of the process only allows the owner to intervene on these matters after the board's consideration. In the paragraph regarding reserve powers, the bylaws appear to support this supposition by stating, "The board shall review and make recommendations on the following financial matters, for the approval by the shareholders."

The governing board bylaws have drastically improved since the SAV1 visit. They contain much more detail about organizational decision-making, especially the decisions made by the owner, the board of trustees, the president, and the faculty. The clarifications and improvements cited above meet most, if not all, of all the characteristics of an independent board. Only the reserve powers call board independence into question. The WSCUC Governing Board Policy states, "For an institutional governing board to be considered independent, a majority of its members may not have interests that influence their impartial decision-making, create multiple and potentially conflicting relationships, or result in competing loyalties." Certainly, the governing board membership meets the requirements to operate in independent

manner, but with the owner retaining the reserve powers cited above and understanding that the owner also is an active member of the Executive Committee and the Finance Committee and an active member of the community does cause some concern about the board's ability to function independently. However, the team's discussion with the independent board members indicated that the board believed a good balance between meeting the needs of students and the financial return to the owner has been achieved. This is further supported by the fact that even though the sustainability policy allowed the owner to take up to a specific percentage of the operating surplus for the year, he did not take the distribution to assist the institution in achieving its Primary Reserve Ratio goal, in spite of the sizeable tax liability that was likely created for the owner due to the Subchapter S status of the corporate entity.

Overall, the team found enough evidence to support the belief that board of directors can reasonably be viewed as functioning as an independent governing board, in keeping with the WSCUC Governing Board Policy and Governing Board Policy Implementation Guide. (CFR 3.9)

The team noticed that the bylaws of the organization and the institution's Governing Board Manual do not fully match each other in the important area of presidential selection. The bylaws do not contain a reserve power for the owner to approve the president; however, both the governing board manual and the understanding of the independent members of the board indicated that this was a reserve power, but only after the individual had been recommended through the selection process and approved by the governing board. The team recommends that the institution ensure consistency between the corporate bylaws and the Board Governance Manual regarding the selection and approval of the president. (CFR 3.9)

Faculty members at NYFA provide academic leadership at the department level and the institutional level. At the department and program levels, faculty at NYFA design, implement,

assess and revise the curricula. Faculty develop courses, curriculum, and rubrics and ensure that program outcomes are met through the courses. Faculty participate in curricular review and periodic program review through the development of department self-studies.

At the institutional level, faculty members are active contributors on committees, councils and task forces. In the past year and a half, this has included the Committee for Academic Planning and Policy (CAPP), where faculty contribute to how policies and procedures are implemented that affect faculty and students. Faculty also participate on the Diversity and Gender Balance Presidential Task Force and Council on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, which are working to build a stronger, richer, and more inclusive academic environment for students and faculty. A faculty committee also encourages faculty to apply for professional development funds and reviews requests.

The NYFA faculty senate represents faculty in areas of shared governance including senate bylaws that define the length of terms, membership, meetings, committees and officers. The bylaws do not currently describe the purpose, powers, or areas of responsibility of the senate. An executive committee of the senate sets meeting agendas. Administrators meet monthly with the senate to discuss and respond to agenda items of common interest. Since the SAV1, the faculty senate was involved in working with administration to reduce the required work hours for faculty and on faculty pay rubrics. While this work is an important step in strengthening faculty, the team recommends that NYFA address issues of faculty workload, compensation, and performance evaluation, as these were topics that emerged during the SAV2.

During 2018 and 2019, the senate agenda included issues related to facilities and classrooms, faculty pay, a judicial committee for participating in reviewing complaints against faculty, as well as discussions of assessment, student learning, the social well-being of students, and a food pantry to serve food insecure students. All these examples are evidence of NYFA's

strong commitment to leadership in programmatic and institutional success as well as to the success of its students. (CFR 3.10)

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that NYFA has presented sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 3 that is required for initial accreditation.

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

Quality Assurance Processes (CFRs 4.1, 4.2)

As stated previously in this report, NYFA has developed and implemented quality assurance processes including program review, academic and co-curricular assessment, curricular review, course evaluations, surveys, student input via focus groups, and auditing of institutional transactions and processes. Data are used to monitor effectiveness, including admissions, enrollment and retention/withdrawal data.

Program curricula are reviewed annually. Academic and co-curricular program reviews are underway with more scheduled for review over the next few years. The self-studies provided as examples are extensive and contain both qualitative and quantitative data. The program review template requires institutional program inputs and outcomes plus data on peer departments for comparison. Academic program reviews encompass all levels in the discipline, from certificate to master's degrees. The reviewers appear highly qualified and provide detailed feedback that address department and program strengths and challenges. These reviews led to changes and improvements at the department level as documented by the post-review MOUs. The program reviews lead to some resource allocations that will improve the program or department. They also lead to academic recommendations, such as creating the MFA in five semesters in the Acting department, adding techniques classes, and improving the effectiveness of admissions standard and processes.

Similarly, assessment of student outcomes leads to identification of issues and serious efforts to examine data and address issues. For example, results of the Oral Communication assessment by the Liberal Arts and Sciences department were presented in a comprehensive report. Oral Communication was assessed at both the lower and upper division levels across all majors. Data were examined carefully and in depth, and a set of implications and plans for addressing the issues, including modifying the rubric and improving departmental practices, were made as a result. Written Communication assessment findings led to reviewing the curriculum to even out the deliverables over the course of the program, adding additional response papers, and reworking assignments. Other more significant responses are under consideration such as extending program length or modifying admissions requirements. As stated earlier in this report regarding Standard 2, NYFA is poised to take its assessment agenda to a new level and continue to use findings to make important program adjustments and allocate resources for student success. (CFR 4.1)

As addressed earlier in this report, the IRE office has a broad portfolio, including data reporting, assessment, and program review. The office is responsible for both internal reporting such as basic data for the program review process, and external reporting including to BPPE, NASAD, IPEDS, WSCUC and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The IRE office also trains and supports faculty and staff on assessment methods and tools, including program review procedures. Other task force and committee documents, and the Strategic Diversity and Gender Balance Study incorporated both data and/or survey results produced or supported by the IRE office.

The institution is working to upgrade its student information system to build out an improved version of FileMaker to improve student data. A Data Management Committee was created as a result of the Enrollment Management Task Force Findings to address a few issues

related to the data or its consistency. This group will work on establishing clearer and more consistent data standards, processes, and monitoring to improve the quality of data overall.

There is significant evidence that the institution's commitment to the use of data supports positive change and enables NYFA be a learning organization. (CFRs 4.1, 4.2)

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that NYFA has presented sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 4 that is required for initial accreditation.

SECTION III. CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS

The New York Film Academy is an exciting institution. It deploys a cohort-based, hands-on curricula providing its students a range of B.F.A. and M.F.A degrees relevant to film and other entertainment media. The team found the NYFA curricula to be strong. The institution has a compelling mission and effective institutional strategies and tactical activities to accomplish this mission. Its facilities are of high quality. Its faculty display talent, dedication and enthusiasm. It appears to be well managed by dedicated and experienced administrators.

In the year and a half between the team's first visit and this second visit, NYFA has been involved in an impressive amount of activity—with extensive engagement of internal and external constituencies—striving to ensure it is in compliance with the four standards for WSCUC accreditation. Highlights of significant changes include:

- Clarifying the respective roles and responsibilities of the owner, the president, the board of directors, and the senior administration.
- Expanding the governing board and revising the bylaws.
- Demonstrating a commitment to diversity and to being an inclusive community.
- Pursuing an impressive and comprehensive process for assessing curricular and co-curricular programs and learning outcomes.

- Strengthening student support services.
- Improving the clarity and transparency of its institutional decision-making.

In addition, NYFA has continued to work hard to ensure that the language proficiency of its many international students does not prevent them from achieving their individual learning goals nor lead to complications in the learning of others. NYFA is aware of the importance of this challenge, and the need for continued attention to ensure that students are successful and meet the institution's learning outcomes and standards of performance. As part of the recruitment and enrollment of international students, the admissions structure across campuses and across recruiting geographies may well benefit from stronger integration and transparency.

While the facilities are excellent, space is tight in many places. NYFA is well aware that as it moves forward, ensuring that space needs are met will be an important priority.

As a last comment, it probably is the case that virtually all institutions of higher education going through accreditation reviews indicate how helpful the process has been for them. Many undoubtedly are sincere. In this case, however, it seemed to the team that at every level of the organization, the WSCUC process of applying for initial accreditation has been incredibly helpful as NYFA positions itself for the future.

SECTION IV. INVENTORY OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS INDICATORS

Since the SAV1 in fall 2017, NYFA has conducted program reviews in spring and summer 2018 covering eight programs at multiple degree levels in the Acting for Film and the Filmmaking departments. In both reviews, programs at the certificate, bachelor's and master's level were incorporated in the review. The Liberal Art and Sciences general education curriculum and Screenwriting Department programs were reviewed in Fall 2017. All programs have been put on a five-year cycle of review starting in 2017. In addition to the program listing

on the IEEI, non-academic programs are also now on a five-year cycle of programs review.

Program review results are well documented, with a memorandum of understanding established for each review.

SECTION V. COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commendations

The WSCUC review team commends the institution for:

1. Clarifying the respective roles and responsibilities of the owner, president, and board of directors
2. Expanding the board of directors with highly qualified members with diverse areas of expertise
3. Building an inclusive community, exploring ways to embed diverse perspectives in the curriculum, and holding campus events that celebrate diversity
4. Developing a comprehensive plan for assessing curricular and co-curricular programs and learning outcomes
5. Creating a financial sustainability policy
6. Strengthening student support services and campus climate
7. Improving the clarity and transparency of institutional decision-making

Recommendations

The WSCUC review team recommends that the institution:

1. Examine and modify English language proficiency standards and support services to enable admitted students to be successful in their chosen programs and consistently meet student learning outcomes. (CFRs 1.6, 1.7, 2.6, 2.13)
2. Continue to evaluate and improve recruitment and admissions structures and practices to ensure new student enrollment goals are attained with students capable of completing their chosen programs. (CFRs 1.7, 3.7)
3. Improve communication strategies, and after stakeholders have had the opportunity to provide appropriate input into decisions, ensure that important matters are shared with the community in a timely manner. (CFRs 1.7, 3.6, 3.7)

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4. Address issues of faculty workload, compensation, and performance evaluation. (CFRs 2.9, 3.1, 3.2)
5. Provide physical space for the confidential interviewing, tutoring, and advising of prospective and current students. (CFR 3.5)
6. Improve institutional libraries so they are adequately resourced (space, staff, holdings, databases) to support academic programs. (CFR 3.5)
7. Create financial policies for the institution's cash balances while preserving sufficient levels of institutional liquidity. (CFR 3.4)
8. Ensure consistency between the corporate bylaws and the Board Governance Manual regarding the selection and approval of the president. (CFR 3.9)