

**REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM**  
**CAPACITY AND PREPARATORY REVIEW**  
**TO POINT LOMA NAZARENE UNIVERSITY**

October 25, 2006

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
Reaffirmation of Accreditation

**Team Roster**

Kathleen A. O'Brien, Chair, Alverno College  
John A. Hughes, Assistant Chair, The Master's College and Seminary  
Ming-Tung Lee, California State University, Sacramento  
Lena T. Rodriguez, San Diego State University

The evaluation team in conducting its review was able to evaluate the institution according to Commission Standards and the Core Commitment for Institutional Capacity and therefore submits this Report to the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for action and to the institution for consideration.



## **PART I: Overview and Context**

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In late August, the WASC visit team members received the Point Loma Nazarene University (PLNU) Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) self-study report along with a complete set of all required support materials. Team members completed a review and written summary evaluation of all materials prior to their teleconference meeting on September 29<sup>th</sup>, in which the self-study evaluations were discussed and writing responsibilities were assigned.

The team spent three days on the PLNU campus interviewing (individually or in groups) a wide range of administrators, faculty, staff, and students. The team was able to tour the main campus and Mission Valley campus facilities and to review additional documentation provided by the institution.

The visiting team wishes to express its appreciation to PLNU for their thorough and professional handling of all aspects of the self-study process and visit. The self-study report and supporting materials were complete, organized, well-written, professionally presented, and responsive to WASC guidelines. The team was warmly welcomed by the campus community and discussions with the team members were thoughtful and candid.

### ***A. History***

Point Loma Nazarene University was founded in 1902 in Los Angeles. The institution's first president had a long term vision for the school to develop into a substantial university of 3,000 students—with various professional schools and an undergraduate residential liberal arts college—a university vital in the Christian faith, excellent in academics, robust in scholarship, intentional about character formation, and faithful to the sponsoring denomination while remaining open to enrolling students from all denominations.

Eventually, the institution made its way to suburban Los Angeles and operated as Pasadena College (PC). Over the years, PC experienced times of both feast and famine but eventually developed

into a solid, stable liberal arts institution of about 1,300 students. The College earned accreditation from the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools in 1943, and the Western College Association accredited PC in 1949. Although it was a vibrant academic community with many faculty and staff members living within walking distance, the 19-acre campus was simply too small to permit further growth and development. In 1973, the College sold its campus in Pasadena and bought a 90-acre site overlooking the Pacific Ocean in San Diego—becoming first Point Loma College, then Point Loma Nazarene College, and finally Point Loma Nazarene University.

Since its relocation to San Diego, the institution has seen unprecedented growth and development. Since the 1996 visit of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) alone, over 70 million dollars have been invested in physical plant and technology. The Master Plan for the main campus is virtually complete with the exception of renovations in the Physical Education Complex and the science and mathematics facilities. There has been a 40 percent increase in full-time faculty (to 157), student academic background has increased substantially (the entering freshman average grade-point average is now 3.72, and the average SAT is 1134), and scholarly productivity and research are encouraged and flourishing. In late 1997, the institution elected its first lay president, signaling a serious commitment to professional management, strategic leadership, and resource acquisition. In 1998, the college moved to a university status from Point Loma Nazarene College to Point Loma Nazarene University, a further indication that many of the founder's hopes and dreams had become, in fact, a reality. In 2000, the University's enrollment reached the cap imposed by the City of San Diego—a maximum of 2,000 full-time equivalent students, calculated as an average between fall and spring semesters of all courses offered at the Point Loma main campus. As a result of the pressures caused by the cap, all graduate programs were moved from the main campus on the Point Loma Peninsula to a newly acquired educational facility ten miles away in San Diego's Mission Valley. The main campus is now at capacity solely with undergraduate programs – approximately 2,400 students

with 1,650 living in residential housing. In addition, the institution has developed new graduate programs in business and nursing, as well as new facilities for graduate education in Arcadia and Bakersfield. The University total enrollment today stands at approximately 3,200 students.

### ***B. CPR Report Quality & Alignment with the Proposal***

The visiting team found that the University's CPR activities and report corresponded very closely with their original proposal. Their approved ***Institutional Proposal*** defined eight desired outcomes from the self-study process, and proposed a work plan that would enable them to systematically address each of these goals through both the CPR and the Educational Effectiveness review (EER) phases of their self-study. They have faithfully implemented the proposed work plan (making small, intelligent adjustments where appropriate), and have made significant progress toward the accomplishment of all eight of their goals.

The organization of the PLNU CPR Report is also consistent with their ***Institutional Proposal***, containing seven essays that discuss their capacity to meet all WASC Criteria for Review (CFRs) as well as addressing their response to issues from their previous reaffirmation of accreditation visit. Consistent reference was made throughout the report to appropriate supporting "evidence" and documentation which had been provided, some in hard-copy form, but much in electronic format via an extremely well-organized and formatted CD ROM and on the accreditation section of their public website. The team commends the University for its level of transparency and public self-disclosure in the type and detail of the information offered for review and provided publicly at [www.pointloma.edu](http://www.pointloma.edu). While it was clear that there were many individuals and groups involved in its authoring, the report had a consistent voice and tone that made it easy and informative to read. In addition, the institution was successful in producing a report that was more than simply a "compliance document." The essays

contained a level of self-analysis that resulted in focused and thoughtful recommendations for additional work and further study.

### ***C. Response to Previous Commission Issues***

The 1997 reaffirmation of accreditation action letter from WASC identified the four areas of 1) planning, 2) assessment, 3) diversity and 4) faculty as needing continued attention on the part of PLNU as they worked toward their next accreditation review cycle. The PLNU CPR report was organized to contain specific reflective essays addressing progress that has been made since 1997 relating to planning, assessment, and diversity, as well as identifying additional activities still to be completed in each area. Discussion of the WASC-identified faculty-related issues is imbedded in a variety of the CPR report sections. A review of the supporting documentation makes it clear that there have been significant sustained broad-based campus efforts to address these issues. While each of these areas will be discussed in more detail in the context of the standards, PLNU progress and current status in relation to each of these four issues can be briefly summarized as follows:

**1. Planning:** The institution has developed and implemented regularly-scheduled processes for strategic planning and academic planning. The President and Board take key leadership responsibility for institutional planning and involve the breadth of the campus community in the process. The institution is growing in its ability to systematically use institutional assessment data to inform their planning, and is still exploring how to efficiently interconnect the various dimensions of the planning process.

**2. Assessment:** The development of a formalized and expanded “University Data Set” to annually document key institutional characteristics data has been of increasing benefit to the strategic planning activities. In addition, PLNU has adopted the “Nichols Model” as a framework around which they have structured their academic and co-curricular institution assessment plans. Formal student learning

outcomes and associated assessment methods have been defined for general education (GE), all major programs, and the student development area. The formal cycle for program review is in place and operating.

**3. Diversity:** PLNU has sought to increase its gender balance, cultural diversity, and racial/ethnic diversity. It has made progress increasing the cultural, racial and ethnic diversity of its student body steadily in the last 5 years, moving from 14% non-white new student enrollment to 20% in the undergraduate population. Though the percentage of female to male students remains at the 60% to 40% level, this is roughly the same percentage as universities of its type. The composition of full-time and part-time faculty at the undergraduate and graduate levels has changed somewhat from 2001, with increases in the number of Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic faculty (from 8.5% to 13.7%).

The university also set forth goals for ensuring student success with support networks and services, attending to campus climate, and addressing diversity dimensions in the curriculum. Faculty and staff have made progress on all these goals. The Student Development Office has established a special office of Diversity and International Student Services that helped students form a number of support groups. The faculty have also explicitly included a set of diversity-related Educational Effectiveness indicators (see #EEI #8, #9, #10) that they intend to not only measure but embed in the general education curriculum in a developmental manner.

**4. Faculty:** After the last WASC visit, the institution was encouraged to focus on supporting faculty scholarship and processes for granting promotion and tenure. Both of these issues were addressed in the intervening year. The promotion and tenure procedures were revised and set forth clearly in the Faculty Handbook. The university has also increased the level of financial support for travel and professional development. Finally, it has encouraged both faculty research and collaboration with students on research projects.

## **PART II: Evaluation of Institutional Capacity In Relation to the Standards**

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

*The institution defines its purposes and establishes educational objectives aligned with its purposes and character. It has a clear and conscious sense of its essential values and character, its distinctive elements, its place in the higher education community, and its relationship to society at large. Through its purposes and educational objectives, the institution dedicates itself to higher learning, the search for truth, and the dissemination of knowledge. The institution functions with integrity and autonomy.*

#### ***A. Institutional Purposes***

In 2004, PLNU revised its Mission and Vision statements, using the Vision Statement to organize ways to monitor its progress (CFR 1.1). The university is now gathering data around the following five vision elements: Excellence in Academic Preparation; Wholeness in Personal Development; Faithfulness to Mission; Leading Wesleyan Voice in Higher Education; and Leading Wesleyan Voice in the Church. It also added a sixth element, Support for the Vision, to capture data on financial and management goals. Reaching back to 2002, the university has begun to gather data around each of the elements.

As part of its larger strategic planning process during its August faculty convocation in 2004, PLNU selected a set of thirteen learning outcomes that all students who graduate ideally should demonstrate (CFR 1.2). These learning outcomes are organized thematically and are intended to “identify specific, measurable items that are excellent predictors of success in the knowledge, competencies, and attitudes that faculty identified as expectations of all the graduates.” Using these faculty-identified learning outcomes as input, the General Education Task Force and the Assessment Committee developed three home-constructed student assessments (one on holistic writing, one a multi-subject exam, and one on critical thinking and attitudes) that were given to graduating seniors in April of 2004, 2005, and 2006. The General Education and Assessment committees have analyzed the results identifying both areas of strength and gaps in student performance. As part of this process, the

committees also identified 10 recommendations that were forwarded to the president, and were clearly intended to be improvement goals for teaching, faculty work, and changes in the curriculum.

The university has sound operational management and strong senior leadership. The president and his administrative cabinet have regular meetings each Tuesday to monitor and discuss implementation of the key strategies and operations of the university. They discuss, among other topics, enrollment targets and progress, further systematizing their data-gathering strategies, planning related to the universities off-site programs (CFR 1.3). They involve faculty members in the strategic planning process.

When operational problem arise, they act decisively. Last year, for example, this council took strong action to more systematically manage and centralize the Mission Valley operations in light of PLNU's mission and its desire to serve students more effectively.

## ***B. Integrity***

Policies regarding Academic Freedom are clearly cited in the Faculty Handbook (CFR 1.4). However, in a survey administered to faculty in the spring of 2005, slightly fewer than 70% of the faculty agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "freedom to pursue their chosen field of scholarship even when it is potentially controversial." The survey also found that many faculty were unaware of the formal policy statement on academic freedom that is in the Faculty Handbook. This is an area that PLNU might want to consider improving since it involves both potential perceptual misunderstandings and problems that could be avoided if faculty members become clearer on what academic freedom means in the context of a faith-based institution. The team, however, did not find any issues raised by the faculty concerning freedom to conduct their teaching and scholarly work. Also, as indicated earlier, the university has increased the amount of funding it allocates to faculty travel and scholarly endeavors.

The visiting team found that trustees voiced strong support for the direction of the university and supports its autonomy. They were also refreshingly candid about the challenges that are presented with a board composed entirely of representatives elected from the denomination's designated regions. The board chair set forth the efforts that the trustees are making to ensure that all members are clear on their roles and are supported in their development as competent trustees of a growing, more complex institution (CFR 1.6). Three years ago, for instance, the board undertook a serious self-assessment process regarding its responsibilities toward the institution and continues to revisit these responsibilities in an on-going way. During a teleconference with board members, the board chair set forth clear expectations for board functioning and has been encouraging trustees to be more proactive in support of PLNU's needs. The board also supported the president's efforts to set aside \$250,000 in direct support of efforts to recruit a more diverse student body. Trustees voiced their awareness, too, of the problems encountered in recruiting new faculty members because of the high housing costs in the Southern California market. They are exploring options to assist with this on-going barrier.

As indicated in their proposal, PLNU set forth goals to improve the diversity of its student body, faculty and staff, to improve the campus climate for all students, and to offer support programs through the Student Development Office. The university has made improvements in each of these areas. As mentioned earlier, \$250,000 was set aside in 2002 to provide financial assistance to targeted minority groups. PLNU has indeed further diversified its student body, increasing the number of incoming non-white students since 2001 from 14% to 20%. It also has attracted more faculty and staff of color (CFR 1.5).

The Student Development Office has taken a number of steps to improve the climate for diversity and support an increasingly diverse student body. It established an Office of Diversity and International Student Services. Under this office is one called M.O.S.A.I.C. (Multicultural Opportunities for Students Actively Involved in Community). This group serves a collection of clubs

such as the Latin American students and Asian students. A Gospel Choir has been started, and other ad hoc or more permanent student interests are readily accommodated by this office (CFR 1.5)

The faculty, too, have taken steps to build into the curriculum ways in which students can gain a better perspective and appreciation for a diverse world. Besides the impressive number of international experiences offered to students, faculty are revising the general education core to enhance and ensure that students develop a more sophisticated global perspective. At the time of our visit the team was alerted to plans by this committee to add into the core a set of eight courses aimed at helping students develop a critical understanding of what it means to live as a Christian in a diverse world (CFR 1.5).

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

*The institution achieves its institutional purposes and attains its educational objectives through the core functions of teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, and support for student learning. It demonstrates that these core functions are performed effectively and that they support one another in the institution's efforts to attain educational effectiveness.*

### ***A. Teaching & Learning***

The university is currently organized into three colleges that offer 50+ baccalaureate degree programs, a California fifth year credentialing program, seven masters degree programs, and several post-masters degree certificate programs. A review of the PLNU undergraduate and graduate catalogs, as well as discussions with faculty and students, revealed that these programs are appropriately labeled (CFR 2.1), logically organized and sequenced (CFR 2.2 & 2.4), clearly described in the catalogs (CFR 2.3), and of a length to be completed in a reasonable length of time. Degree and major program structure are evaluated by the faculty for comparability with other similar programs every five years as part of the institution's program review process (CFR 2.7).

The undergraduate general education (GE) program (common to all baccalaureate programs) requires completion of 56 – 67 units of coursework built around four themes consisting of 13 specific subject/skill areas. Under the control of the faculty GE committee, the GE curriculum has been thoughtfully designed with institutional mission and vision statements (to teach...to shape...to send) clearly in view, is built on explicitly-stated student learning outcomes (CFR 2.4), and provides a solid foundation for advanced major-related coursework (CFR 2.2a). The GE curriculum addresses all WASC expected areas at some level. The GE committee is currently in discussions with the larger faculty to change the curriculum to embed coursework that actively fosters a more advanced, applied level of diversity-related skills.

Interviews with students indicate that they have an understanding of and a reasonable appreciation for the purposes and requirements of the GE curriculum. Some students expressed their desire to have had more of their lower division and general education courses taught by full-time faculty. PLNU is encouraged to consider to what extent adjustments in teaching assignments could be made toward this end, knowing that early contact with core PLNU faculty could provide benefits in terms of improved student retention rates.

Using the Nichols Model to structure their development activities, PLNU has defined student learning outcomes and identified assessment methods for the GE curriculum and all major programs (CFR 2.4, & 2.6). Learning outcomes are published widely among the faculty and there is a growing understanding of their potential value as a vehicle for identifying needed curricular change. However, as the outcomes are refined, more could be done by the institution to inform and educate students as well as the larger PLNU community about the expected learning outcomes associated with the various degree programs.

A range of student assessment methods are being implemented including in-house developed senior examinations in selected GE areas, portfolios of sample student work, administration of national

subject area exams, and senior capstone experiences (CFR 2.4 & 2.6). Initial administration of in-house GE assessments to senior students has resulted in a number of valuable recommendations for GE curricular improvement that have been included in the PLNU self-study report. It has also resulted in the identification of needed revisions that are being incorporated into the assessment instruments in preparation for their next administration cycle.

A review of PLNU documentation indicated that the departments vary somewhat in regard to where they are in implementation of their assessment plans. The PLNU self-study essay on assessment presents a number of recommendations for important near-term assessment program implementation activities. As they have identified, there is a continuing need to develop a deeper understanding and common language for across-campus assessment-related discussions. They also need to develop more standardized procedures and structures for collecting, storing, summarizing, analyzing, and reporting the range of types of assessment data prescribed in their assessment plans. The Student Development department has worked hard at defining mission-related co-curricular program student outcomes and identifying appropriate assessment strategies. It is suggested that the faculty and student development staff jointly examine how they might more explicitly connect the student learning experiences inside and outside the classroom.

The University has defined program review guidelines and has a scheduled five-year cycle for completion of program reviews by the various academic departments (CFR 2.7). One full cycle of departmental reviews has been completed by the institution, and they are currently in their second cycle using a revised set of guidelines that provides a closer tie to student learning outcomes. However, as described by the PLNU provost during the visit team's discussion with the assessment committee, the university needs to examine the interrelationship between on-going student assessment activities, state and national program certification requirements (e.g., nursing, business, teacher credentialing), program review, and strategic planning to ensure that these processes use a common set

of standards, underlying assumptions, and source data to inform their decision making. The institution is also encouraged to examine their current program review procedures to identify possible ways to better involve PLNU alumni in the process, and also to ensure that external reviewer participation is a part of all departmental review plans.

### ***B. Scholarship & Creative Activity***

PLNU places a high value on scholarship (as defined by Ernest Boyer) and provides a number of programs to encourage and support the faculty in this regard. All full-time faculty receive a \$1,000 annual professional development stipend, and there is additional funding available (by request) to support additional scholarly endeavors of merit (e.g., paper presentation at a national conference, collaborative research projects involving students). In addition, there are a number of established programs to encourage faculty scholarship including the faculty workshop series, established faculty reading groups, the structure of the faculty retreats, and the “Research and Special Project” (RASP) \$500 to \$2,000 grants (CFR 2.8). Faculty reported that the administration recognized that the level and type of scholarship varies as faculty advance through stages of life and differing personal circumstances (e.g., personal health issues, family situations, housing challenges).

A number of faculty within a variety of departments have pursued and obtained outside grants for research projects. Since these activities have mutual benefits to both PLNU and the faculty, the institution is encouraged to explore how it might provide additional centralized support for the proposal-writing process (e.g., centrally-published institutional background and statistical data that is commonly required in grant proposals, editing assistance, printing support).

The faculty also reported a growing trend to involve undergraduate students in their research activities (CFR 2.9). This practice has obvious advantages for both the institution, the faculty, and for the student to enrich his/her academic program with experiences that will likely encounter in graduate

study and professional vocational settings. The institution should consider the development of a set of guidelines to define appropriate expectations for types and amount of responsibilities and experiences given to undergraduate students, differences between paid and unpaid student research activities, and procedures for informing and coordinating with other campus departments.

### ***C. Support for Student Learning***

As evidenced by the strong student retention and graduation rates, the institution has been careful to establish admission policies for freshmen as well as transfer students (CFR 2.14) that are well tuned to the academic expectations intrinsic to each degree program (CFR 2.3). While having fully developed admission policies and challengingly high admission standards, the institution provides an opportunity for admission of a small number of academically less-prepared students and has a fully developed support system to maximize their potential for success. The team was impressed with the careful attention that the institution has given to organizing the new student orientation (NSO) program to enable early linkages between students and faculty. They also take great care in selecting a first semester of courses for new students (based on a profile of individual student characteristics) that are well suited to the student's academic needs, learning style, and personal strengths (CFR 2.3., 2.10, & 2.13).

It was obvious from a review of documentation as well as from conversations with faculty, staff, and students that PLNU provides a very supportive environment for students, personally and academically. The institution provides a variety of mechanisms for students to receive additional academic support through peer tutoring and organized study groups. Every student is assigned to a full-time faculty as her/his academic advisor, and is required to meet with him/her prior to registering for classes (CFR 2.3, & 2.12). The campus "wellness center" provides a full range of student health-related services (both corrective and preventative), and there is a campus culture in which it is "okay"

for the student to admit he/she is struggling with a problem (CFR 2.10, & 2.13). Student surveys reported a high level of satisfaction with campus support services in both the academic and co-curricular areas.

The PLNU student development programs are thoughtfully designed to complement (and in some areas integrate with) academic experiences. Specific outcomes have been developed for these programs which relate to the institutional mission/vision statements and are tied to specific assessment strategies. This institution is in the process of developing a co-curricular “transcript” to capture a more formal record of out-of-class student activities. The institution offers an impressive variety of cross-cultural missions opportunities (both locally and abroad) and international study programs available with the result that approximately 40% of graduating seniors in 2005 have had a study abroad experience during their time at PLNU (CFR 1.5, 2.5, & 2.13). The team would encourage the PLNU student development staff to continue to refine their data collection and analysis capabilities to maximize use of this valuable information, and to identify mechanisms for linking this data with assessment data from the students’ academic experience to provide an integrated picture of institutional culture, strengths, and areas for potential improvement.

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

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

#### ***A. Faculty & Staff***

PLNU has a collegial and capable cohort of administrative and faculty leadership. Currently, the administrative leadership, along with the faculty and staff, are engaged in a strategic planning initiative that seeks to increase enrollment, advance the professional schools and graduate programs, enhance

diversity, initiate a five year comprehensive campaign for capital and scholarship development, and grow foundation assets and planned gifts (CFR 3.1 & 3.2). It will be important that the administrative leadership synchronize the strategic planning initiative with the budgeting process so that the campus goals and relative fiscal requirements are aligned and unfold in a systematic manner (CFR 4.2). Teaching excellence is a value central to the university. PLNU has a distinctive culture that exists *to Teach, to Shape, and to Send*.

PLNU provides faculty development funding through the Research and Special Projects Fund (RASP) (CFR 2.8 & 3.4). The basic purpose of this program is to assist faculty members who desire to do research in their area of specialization, but have not been able to obtain funding for the projects. An average of ten to twelve RASP fund grants are awarded each year (since 2000) to faculty members for research and project expenses. Faculty development workshops, research brown bag meetings, and lunch book club sessions are regularly scheduled to encourage pedagogical creativity and further research agendas.

### ***B. Fiscal, Physical & Information Resources***

The Administrative Cabinet serves as the president's primary budgetary advisory group (CFR 3.8). This governance body continually reviews new demands on the budget and recommends and prioritizes allocations. The voices of the faculty, student and staff constituencies are only represented indirectly through their respective vice presidents in the budgeting process. The cabinet could benefit from the input of a faculty, staff and/or student representative – creating a more transparent and inclusive budgetary process.

The president talked about specific steps he has taken to bring a greater measure of diversity to the administrative team. The institutional requirement that all board members and senior members of the administration be members of the Nazarene church significantly narrows the pool of qualified

candidates available to fill administrative positions. However, the president seemed committed to continuing his efforts in this area, in part through use of a “grow your own” strategy by identifying and developing diverse leadership from within existing PLNU staff.

Like many small private faith-based institutions, the financial plan for the campus is heavily dependent on revenue from tuition and fees (approximately 72%). In an interview with the visiting team, the PLNU chief financial officer shared his commitment to incorporate initiatives in the strategic plan (currently being developed) that would enable the administrative leadership to proactively manage the budgetary challenges raised by this level of tuition dependence. He also emphasized the need for the Institution to continue to identify additional revenue streams to augment tuition and fee revenues.

Growing graduate programs will require a strategic alliance between the planning committee, graduate program leadership, and the budget committee. A robust and well respected graduate program will require high potential students. To attract these students, PLNU will have to provide some degree of financial support (i.e., graduate assistantships, stipends) (CFR 3.6). Once again, this strategic plan for growth has to be reflected in the financial business plan.

The library uses contemporary technology to ensure access to materials and information management (CFR 3.6). The new library director highlighted the ease and expediency of their interlibrary loan arrangements and information management systems. The library offers orientation assistance to freshman and transfer students. This ameliorates concerns that students lack the “know how” regarding the use of library resources.

PLNU periodically hosts community days. Individuals from the community are encouraged to visit the campus and participate in tours of the campus library as well as other scheduled events. This is but one way in which PLNU connects with the community.

Point Loma Nazarene University employs a chief information officer responsible for all computing, network and telecommunications (CFR 3.7). The institution has a campus network and

campus wide internet access, both wired and wireless, serving all facilities (on the main campus and in the satellite campuses), including resident halls. The chief information officer (CIO) has a strategic and purposeful maintenance plan for upgrades and technological renewals. A CMS (content management system) has been employed to assure ADA compliance and to promote content management. And, the CIO has also contracted with Element K to provide technical, on-line (self-paced) training support for faculty. Dedicated Blackboard support is also available to faculty and staff. The technological infrastructure is centralized to more effectively support educational, instructional, and administrative purposes.

Overall, in reference to Standard 3 and based on the PLNU CPR document and on the interviews conducted during the site visit, the visiting team believes that the *“institution has history of financial stability, appropriate independent audits, and realistic plans to eliminate any accumulated deficits and to build sufficient reserves to support long term viability”* (CFR 3.5).

#### **Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement**

*The institution conducts sustained, evidence-based, and participatory discussions about how effectively it is accomplishing its purposes and achieving its educational objectives. These activities inform both institutional planning and systematic evaluations of educational effectiveness. The results of institutional inquiry, research, and data collection are used to establish priorities at different levels of the institution, and to revise institutional purposes, structures, and approaches to teaching, learning and scholarly work.*

##### ***A. Strategic Thinking & Planning***

In response to the last WASC reaffirmation of accreditation review with regard to planning, the University has strengthened its strategic planning process with the establishment of an academic master plan and a framework for ongoing strategic planning. The University’s mission is simple but clear in its intention to strive *To Teach, To Shape, and To Send*. As the central plan to align all academic and educational activities of the University, the Academic Plan is comprehensive and

connects the University's academic planning to the University Data Set, assessment of academic and co-curricular programs (CFR 4.2 & 4.3). While there are also connections to the budgeting process, these could be strengthened to insure a clear alignment between budgeting and institutional mission priorities. The Mission, the Vision statement, and a set of goals were developed by the Strategic Planning Committee with broad participation of all constituencies of the University (CFR 4.1).

The visit team was impressed by the strong commitment to the University's mission expressed by the faculty, staff, administrators, and the Board of Trustees. They also share the pride of being a member of the University community. The team was particularly encouraged that the Board of Trustees has been engaged in capacity building and regular self assessment of the Board functions and activities (CFR 3.9).

In addition to the commendable progress made by the University, the visiting team has also discovered areas of improvement that we believe will enhance the University's capability in implementing the goals for the Educational Effectiveness review.

As a part of the WASC review process, more than 80 recommendations were identified and submitted to the President for achieving improvements in data portfolio, educational effectiveness indicators, WASC standards, planning, assessment, and diversity. The large number of recommendations demonstrates the institution's commitment and the thoroughness of its continuing improvement effort. However, the team believes that the University can potentially achieve more in-depth and long lasting effects by prioritizing, rank-ordering, or synthesizing the recommendations to better focus for the educational effectiveness review.

The comprehensive nature of the Capacity and Preparatory Review process has perhaps contributed to the perception among some faculty and administrators that there are multiple and possibly duplicative planning efforts being established. These planning efforts include the strategic planning activities, assessment of student learning outcomes, assessment of co-curricular programs, periodical

program reviews, and accreditation by specialized professional organizations (e.g., AACSB for business). There are common elements in these planning-related efforts. It is advisable for the faculty and administrators in charge of these efforts to determine how they might inter-relate the various planning and assessment activities to minimize duplications among the required documentations and to prevent planning fatigue among the campus participants.

Under the capable leadership of the President, initial steps have been taken to align strategic priorities of the University with the budgeting process through the Administrative Cabinet and the Strategic Planning Committee. There were also funds set aside to support strategic initiatives. We applaud these efforts and encourage further work on synchronizing and aligning this planning with the University's budgeting process.

### ***B. Commitment to Learning & Improvement***

The University Data Set, including the Educational Effectiveness Indicators, was constructed to provide quantitative and qualitative data to assist the University's assessment and planning for continuing improvement. Surveys were conducted to gather information on the attitudes and perceptions of students, faculty, staff, and alumni on important issues identified by the Strategic Planning Committee and the previous WASC review (CFR 4.5 & 4.8). The collection and analyses of the University Data Set have already encouraged reflection and proposals related to students enrollment and preparations, faculty and staff composition, diversity, uses of physical and fiscal resources, and institutional efficiency.

In the assessment of student learning outcomes, the University has trained the faculty and key staff members in the use of the Nichols Model of Assessment, appointed a Vice Provost for Educational Effectiveness, and established a standing Assessment Committee. The University has made significant progress in assessing student learning outcomes in academic majors with annual reports required of all

department chairs/school deans. Co-curricular programs and instructional support are in the early stages of assessment. The University has also conducted assessment on the general education and established goals for all the learning outcomes. Equally significant progress has been made in the use of assessment in the program review and new program development process. The University's inventory indicates that approximately 90 to 95 percent of academic units are on target with an assessment plan, measurement tools, and operating data gathering activities. The University has established an organizational structure to continue its assessment progress into the Educational Effectiveness review phase (CFR 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, & 4.7).

One aspect of the learning and continuing improvement that requires attention is related to the graduate programs. With the rapidly increasing number and percentage of students attending programs at the off-campus sites, and a majority of them being graduate students, the operational and academic quality challenges are understandable. The University is particularly challenged to integrate these off-campus programs more fully into the strategic planning and organizational structure. We recommend the University continue and intensify its efforts to build the organizational infrastructure to support these fast growing programs. Furthermore, special attention is needed for the assessment of academic and co-curricular programs provided to these students.

### **PART III: Major Findings and Recommendations**

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In summary, the visiting team was extremely impressed with the enthusiasm, love, and pride of PLNU that the board, faculty and staff, and students expressed throughout this visit. They have a community of people who care passionately about this institution and work hard to live the values that are at the heart of the mission of this university.

As was stated earlier, the visiting team found the PLNU CPR Report to be a thorough, accurate, and forthright self-assessment of institutional strengths and on-going challenges. This was confirmed through both the review of the documentation provided as well as the campus interviews. Consequently, the team recommendations are a listing of key areas that the institution itself has identified as needing continuing attention in order to strengthen the quality of education provided to its students. The team recommendations are intended to affirm the accuracy of the Institution's self-perceptions, and to encourage its already in-process efforts to address these issues.

1. The meeting with members of the Board of Trustees was instructive and encouraging. They are to be applauded and encouraged in their efforts at self assessment and capacity building.
2. The institution's efforts to build an infrastructure supporting meaningful program, institutional, and student assessment are to be commended. They have rightly recognized the need to determine how they might inter-relate the various strands of assessment, and better align program review and student learning assessment with professional or specialty accreditation where appropriate.
3. Under the capable leadership of the president and his cabinet, the institution has focused more comprehensively on strategic planning. This institution is encouraged to give specific attention to how this planning can be synchronized and aligned with its budgeting process.
4. A large number of recommendations are proposed by PLNU in their CPR Report. It is recommended that this considerable list be rank ordered, and perhaps synthesized, or re-categorized so that the Institution can get its "planning hands" around these thoughtful suggestions.

5. With the inception of new graduate programs delivered from off-site venues, the institution is facing the expected challenge of integrating these programs into its strategic planning and organizational structure. It is recommended that PLNU continue and intensify its efforts to build the organizational infrastructure to support these fast-growing programs.
6. Though the university has a clear policy on academic freedom in the Faculty Handbook, a survey indicated that many faculty members were unaware of this statement and some are not clear to what extent they may pursue their chosen field of scholarship when it is potentially controversial. No specific problems have arisen or were found by the visiting team, but the university would be wise to help faculty explore the meaning of academic freedom in the context of its mission and vision.
7. It is clear to the team that faculty and staff focus their educational and support efforts on students in a multi-dimensional way based on the institution's mission and values. It was particularly exciting to hear about the range of co-curricular programs developed by the Student Development staff. The PLNU faculty and staff are challenged to jointly consider how they might connect more explicitly the student learning inside and outside the classroom.
8. In regard to PLNU's diversity efforts, the team was impressed by the plan of the General Education Committee to imbed important diversity-related outcomes into a substantial number of redesigned core courses. It is suggested that the faculty consider reviewing the student learning outcomes associated with these courses from the perspective of teach-shape-send paradigm to identify how might these courses incorporate the "to send" value into the learning experiences.

## **PART IV: Preparations for the Educational Effectiveness Report and Review**

The PLNU Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) is scheduled to take place early October 2007. The CPR visit team believes that PLNU is well positioned and has established momentum in all necessary areas to develop a strong EER report that is responsive to WASC goals and standards. The one year spacing between the CPR and EER visits will make it critical that PLNU continue to maintain the focus and intensity in their accrediting and assessment-related efforts that were clearly evident during the CPR visit. As they are well aware, the central focus on demonstrating educational effectiveness during the next visit will require that they have further refined their curricular and co-curricular assessment processes, and document how their annual review of assessment data results in program revisions on a systematic institution-wide basis.