Clarifications for NDNU Employees and Students Regarding the WSCUC Visiting Team Report
July 2015

NDNU appreciates the thorough job that the WSCUC Visiting Team did in preparing for and conducting its visit. The community felt that the Team had truly understood the campus and made valuable recommendations to improve the institution.

That said, in a project of this scope and given the limited time that the Team has to prepare its report, there are inevitably some inaccuracies and misunderstandings that find their way into the Team Report. The authors of the report made numerous changes that we suggested to the first draft, but there remained a number of issues that remained in the final report that we feel require comment or correction so that the university community is not left with incorrect ideas about the state of the university. There are also some issues that come to the surface during any visit that are reported by the team, but that are not broadly understood by the campus. In this document, we try to clarify for the community those issues we believe that the Team misreported or that are not well understood by the community.

Note that we believe that the recommendations made by the Team were appropriate, independent of any inaccuracies in the Team Report.

Below we have called out three issues as "significant" and several more as "minor". Please read the significant issues and consult this list as you find other items in the Team Report that may not match with your perception.

<u>Significant Issues</u>

Page 9: Staff shortages in the Student Life Division

<u>Issue</u>: Team report indicates that "staff shortages, especially in the student life division, constrain the time and effort that can be dedicated to fully understanding and improving retention and academic progress". The nature of these shortages and the relationship to retention may not be familiar to the community.

<u>Clarification</u>: As in other areas, Student Affairs has a number of one-person offices, as well as multi-person offices that are understaffed relative to professional standards. Given the significant turnover of staff in the division, as well as additional legal and federal reporting responsibilities taking up more staff time, the Student Affairs offices are less able to be proactive in effectively addressing student retention and academic progress issues by providing programming, services, and analysis/assessment. Shortages have been noted in recent program reviews, but NDNU has not been able to prioritize funding for additional positions in these areas.

Page 17: Status of recommendation of 70:30 ratio of full-time to part-time faculty.

<u>Issue</u>: Team report indicates that "NDNU has set as its goal a ratio of 70:30 for full-time to part-time faculty", but this goal has not been formally adopted by the University.

Clarification: In 2013-14, two task forces (Academic Profile and Faculty Composition/Excellence) recommended a 70:30 ratio of credit hours taught by full-time faculty to credit hours taught by part-time faculty. The Visiting Team took this as a goal already adopted because of the way it was stated in one of the task force reports. In fact, this ratio is a significant stretch relative to the University's current financial position and the ratio has not been adopted as a university goal. As indicated in NDNU's Institutional Report (August 5, 2014) on page 31, NDNU has struggled to maintain a 50:50 (or 50%) ratio. The ratio for 2013-14 was 46%. With the new full-time faculty hires for Fall2105, the active full-time teaching faculty should increase enough to move back to or just above the 50% level, but will not approach 70% or even 60%. There is broad agreement that the University would operate better with more full-time faculty. However, given our many needs, approval of additional faculty lines must be considered in our broader budgetary context, as well as in the context of the needs of specific programs.

Page 33: Number of faculty per program.

Issue: Team report says "The team's understanding, corroborated by faculty perception, is that it was not uncommon that programs were subsisting on one or two full-time faculty (ranked or not), even in programs with over 100 students, and at both undergraduate and graduate levels." This is not the current situation.

Clarification: While faculty sufficiency remains an issue, there are no programs at any level that have over 100 students and less than two full-time faculty. One program has had no full-time faculty (Kinesiology at 86 students in Fall 2014 – new FT hire in Fall 2015 after two previous failed searches), while those that have only one faculty member fully assigned generally have several other full-time faculty in the area who teach in the program (e.g., Business Intensive 99, Multiple Subject Credential 76, Single Subject Credential 66, MA English 16). There are also special situations such as Special Education (89 students) where there were two faculty, we have lost both of them, and we are in process of hiring new faculty. See the Faculty Needs Model (Document 3-03) for enrollment and faculty numbers.

<u>**Minor Misunderstandings and Clarifications**</u>

Page 2: Number of full-time faculty.

Issue: Team report says that the list provided indicated 68 full-time faculty members in spring 2015, but we did not have 68 active full-time faculty members.

Clarification: While the list provided to the Team included 68 faculty members, it clearly indicated that two were on leave and two were in administrative positions. Additionally, the list identified four Library faculty. So a fair representation would have been 64 active full-time faculty, of which 60 are teaching faculty and 4 are library faculty.

Page 2: Percent of the student population who are evening undergraduates.

Issue: Team report says that 27% of the total student population is evening undergraduates, but in fact, only 16% are evening undergraduates.

Clarification: The team appeared to be trying to make the correct statement that 27% of undergraduate students (by headcount) are enrolled in evening degree programs.

Page 11: ILOs for First Year Seminar.

Issue: Team report cites that there are ILOs for the First Year Seminar, but not for General Education. The statement is not precise and doesn't match our internal language regarding learning outcomes at various levels.

Clarification: In the Catalog, there is a section on Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) which includes a section on General Education Learning Outcomes. Within the GE Learning Outcomes section, there is a paragraph on Freshman Year Seminar. The GE Learning Outcomes section (including the FYS paragraph), is generally not phrased in terms of measurable outcomes and needs serious attention. We believe that this is what the team was trying to say in regard to not having GE Learning Outcomes. In terms of learning outcomes for FYS, we think that they were trying to reference the fact that the Mission Integration Council and the Assessment Council have collaborated on developing a set of "Mission, Values, and Engagement" learning outcomes, based on the Hallmarks, that will be assessed in FYS.

Page 28: Board of Trustees involvement in program review.

Issue: Team report indicates that "Some faculty questioned why trustees are involved in reviewing action plans as well."

Clarification: There seems to be a misunderstanding about the role of the Board relative to program review. The Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) of the Board receives executive summaries and action plans as information items, but does not make formal comments or take action on program review. Rather, the AAC learns about programs from the program review documents and acts at the policy level.

Page 37: Samuel Merritt is not an off-campus site.

Issue: Team report states that NDNU "has three offsite programs at Cañada College, Mission College, and Samuel Merritt University (for completion of a degree in nursing)."

Clarification: Samuel Merritt is a partnership, but is not considered an off-campus site by WSCUC.

Page 38: Enrollment revenue from undergraduate programs.

Issue: Team report states: "… given that NDNU's core revenue source of on-campus undergraduate programs is declining".

Clarification: This is technically correct, but does not capture the rather nuanced issue. We have seen a downturn in our evening undergraduate enrollments, so revenues have declined there. We currently

expect traditional undergraduate enrollment to be flat. However, we are likely to need to further discount tuition for the traditional population and that may erode net revenues. Other factors that may influence future revenue from undergraduate programs include that the population of high school graduates is declining overall in the US and that NDNU has both infrastructure and city restrictions on growth.

Page 38: "Price elasticity" means "price sensitivity".

Issue: Team report states "price elasticity is increasing", but this is not common language unless you are an economist.

Clarification: You may translate "price elasticity is increasing" as "price sensitivity is increasing".