REPORT OF THE WSCUC VISITING TEAM
EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW
for INITIAL ACCREDITATION

To High Tech High Graduate School of Education

March 4-6 2015

Team Roster

Leanne M. Neilson, Chair
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, California Lutheran University

Caron Mellblom-Nishioka, Assistant Chair
Professor, Teacher Education, Special Education, CSU Dominguez Hills

Joseph Hoey
Vice President, Accreditation Relations and Policy, Bridgepoint Education

Alana Olschwang
Director Institutional Effectiveness, Claremont Graduate University

Christopher N. Oberg, WSCUC Staff Liaison
Vice President, WASC Senior College and University Commission

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

The formal action concerning the institution’s status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.
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SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of Institution and Visit

The High Tech High Graduate School of Education (HTH GSE) opened in September 2007. Located in San Diego, the GSE is closely connected both physically and pedagogically to High Tech High (HTH), a public charter school management organization, and to HTH Learning, the parent public benefit corporation. The mission of the GSE is to develop reflective practitioner leaders who work effectively with colleagues and communities to create and sustain innovative, authentic, and rigorous learning environments for all students.

The GSE is committed to providing its students with learning experiences that are personalized, authentic, and relevant. This commitment is derived from the theoretical approach to teaching and learning that guides High Tech High K-12 schools, which centers students in the adult world of work and learning through integrated curriculum and heterogeneous grouping practices. Innovative curriculum, a culture of collaboration, and a total-immersion learning communities serve as hallmarks for the High Tech High pedagogy that is rooted in authentic experiences.

The GSE offers a Master’s of Education (M.Ed.) program with focuses in School Leadership (SL) and/or Teacher Leadership (TL). In 2007, the GSE opened with a cohort of nine HTH teachers enrolled in the Teacher Leadership M.Ed. program. In 2008, the School Leadership program welcomed its first cohort of 6 candidates and the Teacher Leadership program expanded to include external candidates, bringing in a new cohort of 16. Candidates from these original cohorts graduated in 2009 and 2010. Currently, there
are 12 candidates in the School Leadership program and 10 candidates in the Teacher Leadership program.

The GSE’s WSCUC accreditation history dates back to 2007 when the institution was granted eligibility. The CPR Candidacy visit was scheduled for spring 2009 and the EER candidacy visit was scheduled for spring 2010. A CPR visit for candidacy took place in March 2009. Following the review of the CPR visit, the EER visit for candidacy was moved to spring 2011. The EER visit took place in February 2011. In June 2011, the Commission received the EER report and deferred action on candidacy for one year in order for the institution to demonstrate that it meets the WASC Standards and CFRs at the level required for candidacy.

A Special Visit was scheduled for spring 2012 to review progress on the issues cited by the commission. The Special Visit focused on four issues as identified by the Commission Action Letter of July 2011: leadership and governance, organizational structure and decision-making processes, educational effectiveness, and graduate culture. The team found progress in all areas cited in the letter and the EER team report, with further development needed in some of those areas. Subsequently, the Commission acted to grant candidacy to the High Tech High Graduate School of Education for four years, through June 2016. In granting candidacy, the Commission highlighted several areas for attention as GSE moved forward towards initial accreditation:

*Cultivating a graduate culture.* The Commission noted continued concerns about the development of a graduate culture, including support for research, scholarship and creative activity, about the limited scope of the content of the graduate program, and about adequate provision for diversity of viewpoints or multiplicity of perspectives.
independent of the pedagogy espoused by the High Tech High mission and goals, faculty
and staff. The Commission noted its expectation that by the time of the next visit, the
GSE will have made significant progress in the area of graduate culture by clarifying
workloads and expectations about teaching, scholarship and research; identifying the
level of support it will provide to faculty; and implementing long-term methods to mentor
students in their research. Further, the Commission expected the GSE faculty to consider
broadening the content of its program by enriching it with multiple perspectives from the
literature and research in the field. (CFRs 2.1, 2.2b, 2.8, 2.9, 3.1-3.4)

Strengthening leadership. As noted by the Special Visit team, there remains "a
need for title alignments with actual functional responsibilities that parallel best practices
and recognized nomenclature in higher education ... " in particular clarifying the
respective roles of the dean and chief academic officer. (CFRs 1.3, 3.1, 3.10)

Developing the governing board. The Special Visit team found that the GSE
governing board was aware of its responsibilities and dedicated to the values and mission
of the GSE. However, having four corporate entities with overlapping memberships
raised some concerns about whether the GSE has a sufficiently independent governing
board under WASC standards and policies. (CFRs 1.3, 1.6, 3.8, 3.9; Policies on Related
Entities and Independent Governing Boards)

Clarifying organizational structure. The Commission remained concerned about
the extra-institutional, dual focus of most of the GSE’s personnel. The Commission stated
its expectation that the GSE review the number and time commitment of personnel
needed to successfully operate an independent graduate school of education, including
time allotted for scholarly and creative activities, and to carry out the imminent work that
will be needed to move the institution from meeting all WASC Standards and CFRs at a minimal level to meeting them at a substantial level for initial accreditation. (CFR 3.1)

Enhancing educational effectiveness. The Special Visit team observed "it will be critical for the GSE to implement the Institutional Review Process through a complete cycle and beyond." The Commission concurred with the Team, and noted that full implementation of the GSE institutional review system and process with preliminary findings will be expected by the next review. (CFRs 1.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.4).

A Capacity Preparatory Review visit was held in October of 2013. The team affirmed the progress being made by the institution but raised continued concerns regarding the creation of a Graduate Culture and additional issues related to credit hour policy, Board Composition and Development, Faculty Governance and Strategic Planning. The GSE response to these issues is discussed through the document and specifically in item C. of this section.


The visiting team was most impressed with the scope and quality of the EER report and associated documents and noted the intentional response to the issues identified during previous visits. The EER document (December 2014) demonstrates extensive work related to the recommendations of the Commission and the issues that were raised during Capacity Preparatory Review (CPR) team visit of October 2013. Collaborative reflection by the GSE community was clear throughout the document. In its review of the EER the March 2015 visiting team found evidence that the institution has heeded the advice of the Commission. The document indicates the desire of the GSE
to address the recommendations made. The EER report was well organized and clearly cross-referenced. The reflective essays for the standards were capable of standing independently, and serve as evidence of the commitment of the institution to the WASC process.

The quality and usefulness of the supporting evidence provided in the GSE EER was also noteworthy. An accessible and well organized website made supporting materials easy to find. The team found the quality of the documentation around the planning and assessment processes in particular to be thorough, and well developed and reflective of good practice. Any documents or examples of evidence that were not immediately available were quickly made accessible to the committee. The evidence included in the materials demonstrates the institution’s responsiveness, and willingness to undertake relevant studies and to collect appropriate information. Also noted was the community engagement in reflection, action, and analysis of the effectiveness of changes made towards fulfillment of the WASC standards.

C. Response to Issues Raised in the Capacity and Preparatory Review

The institution provided a detailed summary of actions taken in response to recommendations from the Commission Action Letter, recommendations from the CPR report, and narrative from within the CPR report that reinforced or further articulated a specific recommendation. Team members viewed this as a highly responsible approach to addressing previous issues, signifying the commendable depth to which GSE took the Commission’s recommendations and the accreditation process as a whole. Responses to recommendations in the Commission Action Letter and the Institution’s responses are discussed in sequential order below.
Adherence to Credit Hour Requirements and Academic Rigor. The March 7, 2014 Action Letter noted that “The team determined that the current monitoring of time committed to in- and out-of-class work falls short of WSCUC requirements (WASC Policy on Credit Hour). In addition, "the assignments reviewed, while reflective, did not appear to require the level of synthesis and analysis one expects of graduate-level course work, or that which is reflective of the nature of action research and evidence-based decision making for improved teaching and learning practice. (CFRs 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 2.6)."

The Commission expects that GSE will amend its credit hour practices to conform to policy and that it will refine its standards of student performance to reflect a more rigorous level of accomplishment.”

In response to this recommendation, the GSE faculty created new courses and course work, including a required Fieldwork course, and revised the credit hour policy. An examination of the revised credit hour policy revealed that it comports with the WASC definition and federal definition of a credit hour, provides detailed explanation and examples, and provides for an oversight process to ensure adherence to credit hour standards on all course syllabi and within courses. Faculty also refined standards of performance to reflect greater rigor in accomplishment in coursework and capstone projects. The issue with lack of monitoring of students’ performance in their classrooms was resolved through assigning field supervisors and the development of tools for monitoring fieldwork. Faculty workloads were also addressed, and adjunct faculty were added to ensure the needs of the M.Ed. program are being met.

Board Composition and Development. The Commission Action Letter specified a number of areas to be addressed relative to the Board of Trustees: “The current size of
the Board of Trustees does not permit the constitution of Committees with membership
that meets WSCUC policy; similarly, the Operating Agreement does not currently
provide that a majority of members be independently elected. (WASC Policy on
Independent Governing Boards, CFRs 1.6, 3.9) In addition, the current Board lacks a
breadth of membership with relevant experience in the operation and control of
institutions of higher education. The Commission expects that, as the institution
continues to mature, it will constitute its Board with a sufficient number of members,
with appropriate backgrounds, to address these current deficiencies.”

In response to this recommendation, the GSE has taken a number of positive
actions: The Board has increased in size to eight members, including new members with
relevant higher education experience. This has permitted sufficient membership to meet
WSCUC expectations. Board Bylaws have been revised to better align with the WSCUC
Policy on Independent Governing Boards. Recent changes to the Bylaws and Policy
Manual (such as the inclusion of language for removal of a board member for cause and
through majority vote, in accordance with the California Corporations Code, and
inclusion of a requirement and process for presidential evaluation) have been
incorporated into Board Bylaws and Policy Handbook, and finally the revised bylaws
have been approved by the Board at its meeting in February 2015. Board development
has been addressed through using a noted WSCUC consultant to lead the Board Retreat
in October 2014.

Faculty Governance. The Commission Action Letter specified that “The clear
intent of language in the Faculty Handbook is for a shared governance model, but the
institution lacks the specific processes to make this intent operational. (CFR 3.11) The
Commission expects that GSE will develop and implement explicit procedures for the ongoing ownership of the curriculum by the faculty, in keeping with expressed intents.”

In response to the Commission recommendation, the GSE has revised the Faculty-Staff Handbook to clarify the faculty’s ownership of the curriculum, including all course development, program review, and design. After protracted discussion with faculty at the GSE, members of the Visiting Team agreed that basic tenets of faculty governance, such as faculty ownership of the academic programs and faculty representation in decisions that affect the institution, are currently being met. The Visiting Team found that a functional approach to faculty governance through an assembly or faculty of the whole approach is currently in operation. As the institution grows, it will need to address in a more formalized manner how the GSE faculty governance structure operates.

Graduate Culture. The Commission Action Letter noted that “GSE is a graduate education enterprise, which has significantly different attributes vis-à-vis undergraduate teaching and learning. (CFRs 2.8, 2.9,3.4) The creation of the Director of Faculty Research position is an important step in codifying the practice of scholarship and creativity as essential activities, but it is only a step. The Commission expects that GSE will continue to emphasize graduate-level engagements among its faculty and students.” The Visiting Team was particularly impressed with the depth and substance of the GSE’s response to this Commission recommendation and the scope of activities undertaken to deepen and further develop an appropriate graduate culture at the institution. A concerted and multi-faceted effort to develop the graduate culture is evident through the work of the Graduate Culture Task Force (GCTF), the Credit Hour Task Force, and through
recommendations and changes arising out of formal program reviews of the Teacher Leadership M.Ed. and School Leadership M.Ed. programs. Changes made have included:

- Creation of a new Core Values and Foundations course
- Revision of course sequence, syllabi, online forum expectations, and rubrics for all courses
- Attention to details of course sequencing and scaffolding as well as demonstration of competencies and dispositions in the capstone course.

The GSE has taken to heart the Commission’s direction on strengthening research capacity, through the creation of a funded Research Institute directed by Dr. Stacey Callier to support, organize and coordinate research funding and dissemination of practices to improve learning, and through the appointment of Dr. Stephen Hamilton, GSE President Elect, as the Director of Research for 2014-15, to support faculty and student research. Faculty engagement in collaborative research with faculty at other institutions has also expanded. Faculty insistence on reference to appropriate literature in the field in written work, encouragement for appropriate use of APA style, and standardization of higher education nomenclature have taken place at the classroom level. Faculty professional development opportunities, library research database resources, and tracking of the increases in faculty citations are other hallmarks of GSE’s efforts to deepen and expand the graduate culture.

**Strategic Planning.** The WSCUC Commission Action Letter stated “The team found that ‘While the strategic plan resonated with the themes, ideas, and challenges the visiting team heard in the interviews across board members, administrators, faculty, and students, the leadership acknowledged that it was not a living document.’ Evidence-based
decision-making, based on a vibrant strategic orientation, is vital to institutional sustainability. The Commission expects that GSE will develop a process for the continual implementation and recalibration of its strategic plan, and that the process will be implemented by the time of the next review.” (CFRs 4.6, 2.9).

In response to the Commission’s recommendations, the GSE has incorporated elements of strategic planning into its Board retreats, including a retreat with Dr. James Appleton in October 2014 that focused on core values and those activities that support the core values. With external grant support and an external planning consultant, the GSE has begun a review of its strategic planning process, one that will result in a new strategic plan for the institution. At this point, the institution has clearly engaged in planning to plan through first developing a process model for planning, brainstorming a list of principles/priorities for the next strategic plan, identifying draft areas of focus, and generating a list of stakeholders to be involved in development of the next strategic plan.

SECTION II: EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS UNDER THE STANDARDS

When one views the development of knowledge through a lens of learner guided exploration and discovery, it can be difficult to address traditional standards. The visiting team acknowledges the challenges that the institution faced in skillfully communicating the constructivist nature of their mission within the standardized accreditation framework. A review of the EER self-study narrative report revealed the following related to the WASC standards.
A. Standard 1 – Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

Institutional Purposes

The mission of the GSE is to develop reflective practitioner leaders who work effectively with colleagues and communities to create and sustain innovative, authentic, and rigorous learning environments for all students. The mission statement defines the values and character of the GSE and is evident through documents and through practices of the institution. The strategic priorities and core values of the GSE are aligned with the mission. Reflections by faculty and staff on the GSE core values as related to the Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and strategic priorities took place during a 2013 retreat, and the understanding of these core values was evident during the team visit. The core values of equity and social justice have been more intentionally integrated into syllabi, and are addressed through a new introductory course, Core Values and Foundations. Courses have integrated readings on equity and social justice from multiple perspectives and masters projects must address other educators serving diverse student populations. The GSE has expanded its professional development and outreach programs through the Educational Leadership Academy, the Deeper Learning Conference, the Technical Assistance Partnership in Chicago, and through two MOOCs. These efforts are in alignment with the mission of the institution, increasing the preparation of teacher leaders to create inclusive learning environments for all students (CFR 1.1). Team meetings with faculty and board members confirm that education is the primary purpose of the GSE, and that there is autonomy from external entities. (CFR 1.5)
The GSE has a thorough assessment plan in place, with clear learning outcomes and alignment of outcomes at the course, program, and institutional levels. Program learning outcomes are assessed every other year, and program reviews take place on a four-year cycle. (CFR 1.2)

The GSE has a statement of academic freedom on the website and in the faculty and student handbooks. Conversations with faculty during the team visit confirmed that the institution practices its commitment to academic freedom. (CFR 1.3)

**Integrity and Transparency**

The GSE tracks application, enrollment, and graduation rates by gender and ethnicity. A goal is in place to match student enrollment to the demographic composition of California educators as a whole. While the faculty has engaged in several efforts to diversify the student body, the results have not met the expectations of the faculty. The efforts have included outreach to local principals, offering a diversity scholarship, and convening a diversity task force. To encourage representation, a full tuition Diversity Fellowship was launched in 2013, and two students have attended the GSE on these fellowships. The faculty hiring policy articulates the GSE’s commitment to diversity in hiring, and a non-discrimination statement appears on the *Apply page* of the website. Student action research projects specifically focus on inclusivity and equity, with resulting positive effects in the schools where GSE students are employed. (CFR 1.4)

A Diversity Task Force was convened in the fall of 2014 by the President to investigate best practices in recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, staff and students. The Task Force also assessed current conditions, consulted research and leading practices at other institutions, and considered the perspectives of marginalized students.
The task force meets twice a month and is composed of core faculty, adjunct faculty, alums, HTH staff, and the GSE President-Elect. The task force has addressed the culture of the GSE and how to make it a place where diverse students feel comfortable and empowered. They have focused on marketing and outreach for student recruitment, and they are building relationships with organizations and individuals who can support their efforts in the future. During the team visit, the task force members expressed that there is honesty about where the institution falls short and they are making good progress to fully live out their mission. The Review Team recommended that the administration and faculty consider renaming the task force as a faculty standing committee at the conclusion of the strategic planning process. This can provide a place for this work and a systematic way for the GSE to maintain these efforts and build in accountability for progress in this area. Diversifying the student body can be an important component to student success, to provide students the benefits of a diverse learning environment, and underscores the social justice values of the GSE. (CFR 1.4)

The GSE represents itself truthfully through its website and admissions processes. Strong graduation rates indicate timely completion of degrees. (CFR 1.6) The student handbook contains policies on student conduct, grievances, human subject research, disability, and financial matters. The GSE is encouraged to explicitly discuss these policies with students at the outset of the program. A tracking system is in place to maintain records of student complaints. Grievance procedures for faculty and staff are outlined in the faculty and staff handbooks. To date, no grievances have been filed. (CFR 1.6, 1.7).
The GSE exhibits integrity through the implementation of appropriate policies and sound business practices. Staff attended conferences and webinars for training to incorporate leading business practices. Institutional finances are audited annually by independent auditors. (CFR 1.7)

The GSE thoroughly addressed all recommendations from the 2013 CPR visit. The visiting team was impressed with the extensive changes made in the past 18 months. The GSE has taken the accreditation process seriously and is committed to abiding by all WASC policies and procedures. (CFR 1.8)

B. Standard 2 - Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

During the Capacity and Preparatory Review questions were raised regarding academic rigor commensurate with a Graduate program. Specifically, the reviewers noted “few instances of intentional engagement in literature related to best practice, pedagogy and/or research. Student work products lacked citations and references in APA or any conventional scholarly professional writing format. Writing assignments appeared to be “more narrative personal reflection based than scholarly professional style.” (CPR 2.1, 2.5, 2.6, 2.8, 4.4) Additional questions were raised regarding the process by which class credit hours were awarded. (CFR 2.1, 2.2) Finally, it was suggested that a more formalized process for advisement be developed (CFR 2.12). During the pre-visit review of the documents provided, and the on campus visit, team members became convinced that these issues had been addressed and equitable solutions were developed.

Teaching and Learning

The GSE indicates a commitment to developing reflective leaders and practitioners and has articulated this in their Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), “to
Practice Thoughtful Inquiry and Reflection, Design Equitable Learning Environments and Engage in Leadership for School Change.” (CFR 2.3) These outcomes are reportedly the basis of collaborative class activities, implementations at school sites and the focus of both student and faculty research. Each PLO is assessed on a regular basis through multiple measures. Signature assignments, and related rubrics, have been collaboratively developed by the faculty for each of the PLOs. (CFR 2.4) These PLOs are also reportedly aligned with “professional standards in the field.” Courses are reviewed for alignment with these standards on a four-year schedule.

Review of the EER and related documents revealed the creation of a new introductory course, Core Values and Foundations. The course is offered as a weeklong summer intensive and serves to facilitate the development of a cohesive cohort immersed in a graduate culture of review of critical pedagogy, leading practice in the literature, collaborative dialog and active learning. Students and faculty alike spoke highly of the Foundations course and were fairly unanimous in the sense that it provided the grounding for the program. Information literacy was intentionally addressed in this course and students spoke highly of visits to the Library at the University of San Diego. Members of the visiting team were impressed by the intentional design of learning activities that exposed students to rigorous professional learning experiences that set the bar for a rich graduate culture. (CFR 2.1)

A review of syllabi and assignment grading rubrics revealed substantial progress in making explicit the expectations of course and assignment requirements. The team found these to be developed. This sentiment was echoed in our discussions with students who said they appreciated the clarity of the syllabi, assignment guidelines and rubrics.
They indicated that they always knew what was expected of them in courses and as it related to program outcomes. Additionally, faculty engaged students in conversations about assignments to gauge their understanding and to assess the effectiveness of the assigned work projects to generate the advancement of knowledge and understanding (CFR 2.2b, 2.3, 2.6)

Of note, is that when queried about things that they thought would have improved the programs, students said they “wished the program was longer than a year” while another indicated she “wished she could have been embedded in multiple school environments.” These comments speak to the value that the students place on the learning that is occurring during their experiences at the GSE. Faculty and staff are commended for developing programs that are so meaningful for the students. Additionally, students indicated that they go back to their school sites and implement some aspect of the seminar discussions on nearly a weekly basis thus demonstrating the action oriented learning and application of the leading practice discussions. (CFR 2.6, 2.9)

Several high impact practices promoted by AAC&U (American Association of Colleges and Universities) have been adopted. The GSE reconstructed the course sequencing to ensure scaffolding, multiple signature assignments across the curriculum, capstone master’s thesis projects, inclusion of detailed rubrics, and qualitative feedback embedded in coursework assignments. Multiple modes of program review occurred across the curriculum, including interactive online forums, peer rating of student work (proposals, plans, papers, and dilemmas). Further, students contribute to syllabus, assignment, and rubric development. (CFR 2.3)
A discussion of the new credit hour policy was presented in the appendices. Further investigation during the campus visit revealed major change in this area since the CPR visit. Faculty have doubled the number of class meetings, increased the scope of online and asynchronous discussions and significantly redefined the process of mentoring students in their fieldwork. Additionally, in discussions with faculty regarding co-curricular activities it was learned that students regularly participate in the various professional development offerings as support staff, presenters and organizers. These activities are expected as part of the fieldwork requirements and thus are supervised and written reflections regarding participation are expected. It is suggested that this involvement be more explicitly defined so that it can be calculated into the credit hours for fieldwork. (CFR 2.1, 2.2, 2.13) Similarly, advising has been intentionally scheduled and minimum numbers of required meetings have been agreed upon. (CFR 2.12)

Assessment of student learning outcomes has been addressed by the development and refinement of course assignments and rubrics, as well a collaborative process of “looking at student work” in which individual faculty present student work samples across the spectrum and discussion ensues regarding ways to improve student learning. These discussions involve community stakeholders such as principals, board members and faculty from peer institutions. (CFR 2.4) This process is highly developed and to be commended.

Students were clear about the expectations leading to degree completion and were focused and enthusiastic in pursuing opportunities that are available through the Academy Programs, conferences and professional development institutes and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC’s) (CFR 2.1). These are highly developed and considered
to be co-curricular activities in which the graduate students are encouraged to participate. This process and the breadth of the offerings is also to be commended.

Students and faculty discussed the individual development of electronic portfolios and the multiple mediums that are encouraged for their creation. The collaborative nature of the student discussions surrounding this endeavor revealed that students upload videos, blogs, pod casts, interactive slide presentations as well as written reflections and research that may lead to publication. With the “critical friends model” all artifacts are reviewed and revised given constructive collegial feedback prior to inclusion in the portfolios for final faculty review (CFR 2.10).

Inquiry revealed that transfer credits are not considered due to the unique nature of the programs and instruction in the GSE learning environment (CFR 2.14). It was also evident that some discussion has begun surrounding the issue of whether to develop M.Ed. concentrations to support the various credential programs offered through the HTH schools but no decisions have been made and these discussions appear to be in the early stages. (CFR 2.2)

What remains less clear is the process for Student Governance (CFR 2.10). The team acknowledges that the student population is small and commends the faculty and staff on their open door policies and continued involvement with students. However, since the institution is poised for at least moderate growth in the next few years, attention to developing policies and procedures that are formalized, documented and widely shared with all constituents is strongly suggested.

**Scholarship and Creative Activity**
As noted in the EER report, the GSE faculty and students engage in reading and discussion “of researchers as well as theoreticians and practitioners,” however no mention of specifics is included. (CFR 2.8, 2.9) The EER indicates a commitment to the development of publications that enhance the “service of powerful practice.” Students conduct action research projects as their capstone experience leading toward their Master’s Degree. A listing of faculty publications is also included in the attachments and indicates collaborations among members of the GSE learning community as well as with peer educators throughout the country. (CFR 2.8, 2.9)

The GSE created an Institutional Review Board, (IRB), to ensure that all legal and ethical guidelines in human subject research practices are followed. In addition to describing the IRB and related processes within the student handbook, a Guide for Educational Research was provided to students and faculty. The guide clarified the responsibility of the IRB, provided examples for when to apply for IRB approval, and how to contact IRB members. Links to additional useful information was also provided. All students are required to complete the human subjects research tutorial available through National Institute of Health, before submitting materials to the IRB. (CFR 2.8, 2.9)

The visiting team participated in short table talks given by a cross section of graduate students from the School and Teacher leadership programs. The student projects represented an impressive array of action learning projects that provided further documentation of a rich graduate culture. Additional evidence of this was present in our discussion with students. When asked about the writing process and the lack of specific supports such as a writing center, students described a culture of collegial support that
was trained and supported from the Foundations course and continued throughout the program. They described the effectiveness of the critical friends’ process in sharing and critiquing drafts of written work and explained that faculty served as mentors in this process as well. (CFR 2.5, 2.6)

While the GSE does not have its own research library for student and faculty use, extensive collaborations have been established with nearly all the regional colleges and universities that provide access to the needed research materials. A visiting scholar program has been established which further addresses the issues of emerging as a research institution dedicated to enhancing the processes articulated in the mission and goals of the GSE. The Director of Research will provide support and mentoring to students and faculty and will further support the expansion of the Graduate School Culture. (CFR 2.3, 2.13) Continued engagement with realistic peers, to benchmark leading practice in professional graduate school scholarship, structure, policy, procedure, and practice would further serve to enhance the graduate culture.

**Student Learning and Success**

It is noted that students are assigned an advisor as they are accepted and are also paired with “a critical friend” peer. (CFR 2.11, 2.12) It is unclear aside from access to collaborative use of regional libraries what support is available for students with the various challenges that they often face such as finances, personal issues, learning and other disabilities. The lack of formalized student support procedures such as tutoring, disability supports, mental health services and student governance issues is a concern. While it is understood that such processes have yet to become necessary, there are bound to be future situations where the GSE would derive benefit from having such services in
place. It is recommended that the GSE be proactive in developing such policies and procedures now rather be required to do so later at a potential cost to the institution (CFR 2.13).

Also noteworthy is the fact that GSE Masters graduates who decide to continue their education toward a terminal degree and choose to attend the Ed.D. program in Educational Leadership at the University of California, San Diego do so with their degrees accepted completely and with credit toward the Doctorate.

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

Faculty and Staff

The High Tech High Graduate School of Education has a small but stable body of core faculty, five of whom have been with the GSE since the inauguration of the master’s programs in 2007-2008. Dr. Steve Hamilton, the incoming President, will be the sixth member of the core faculty. Evidence of relevant faculty qualifications for both Core and Adjunct faculty was presented to the Visiting Team. With such a small core of faculty, Team members agreed that achievement of gender and diversity hiring goals is difficult. At present, the institution has not been able to meet its own diversity hiring goals among faculty but has made significant progress through the Diversity Task Force on understanding how to attract and retain diverse faculty and in developing an action plan to do so. No formal staffing plan was presented, and the Team agreed the institution should provide further formalization of such a plan as the institution develops its strategic plan. Faculty-to-student ratios are approximately 1 to 3.6, based on headcount.
Team members were impressed with the dedication of the GSE faculty, their collaborative and interactive planning and professional development, and their ability to move the mission of the GSE forward. One example of this ongoing commitment: On February 11th, 2014, GSE faculty met to collaborate on the creation of a new “five buckets of activity” agenda for future faculty activity and growth at GSE in support of the mission, including formal degree programs, credential programs and classes; dissemination; internal professional development; the GSE Center for Improvement Science; and faculty scholarship. That and the numerous other examples of collaborative planning activity the Team heard about during the visit have resulted in development of the institution and the rapid growth of a graduate culture that emphasizes rigor and scholarship within the discipline. (CFR 2.2b, 3.1)

Expectations for faculty workload are clearly described in Section 4.5 of the newly updated Faculty and Staff Handbook. Teaching, scholarship and service are included, and individual assignments are made on an annual basis through discussion with the faculty member, the Program Director, and the Dean. Section 5.1 of the Faculty and Staff Handbook describes the recruitment and orientation of faculty. Section 6.1 offers an in-depth description of the systematic multi-source faculty self-evaluation and peer review cycle, and annual review process in place at GSE. Team members reviewed two examples of faculty evaluations, both of which included a detailed self-evaluation, student evaluation results, peer feedback, and supervisor feedback.

A normative faculty workload includes 60% teaching (equivalent to 9 units per year plus preparation plus 10 advisees), 20% service, and 20% scholarship. Faculty members complete an annual workload report that reflects distribution of their actual
effort. In discussions with faculty and administrators at the GSE, Team members learned that the performance of administrative duties was considered as service, but that strict calculations of administrative workload relative to other service activities were not typically included in workload reports given that faculty wear numerous hats. The annual faculty self-evaluations/performance appraisals reviewed by Team Members were thorough, included significant self-reflection, evidence of student evaluations, publications and presentations, but did not include an evaluation of administrative responsibilities. Reviewers noted that the absence of more rigorous ways of recognizing faculty workload distribution could have ripple effects on other aspects of faculty policy, for example full-time status and sabbatical calculation. The Team recommends that the GSE develop a method and format for planning and articulating the different components of faculty workload. (CFR 3.2)

Faculty development activities at the GSE include internal activities such as analysis of student work, examination of each other’s work through “tuning” processes, program review, and assessment. New adjunct faculty are supported in course design, for example through commendable documents such as GSE Resources for Course Instructors that includes a syllabus template, resources for project creation and rubric design, and digital portfolio handouts. Faculty are also engaged in external professional development activities, including conference attendance, meetings, and consultancies, on an as-needed basis. Core faculty reported that they were free to request conference funding and that such requests are usually approved. Moreover, adjunct faculty members are involved in conference attendance. The EER document also lists a number of professional networks around the world with which GSE faculty are connected. Bimonthly faculty meetings,
using rotating facilitation and structured protocols, enable faculty to interact on items concerned with andragogy at the graduate level. Adjunct faculty are invited, but not required to attend. Section 6.3 in the Handbook notes that “GSE Faculty are encouraged and supported, via a line item in the GSE budget, to attend and present at conferences and workshops as well as publish their work,” and the Visiting Team noted a budget line item in the detailed reports devoted to faculty and staff professional development. From interviews conducted and evidence in disaggregated budget documents presented, it was clear to the Visiting Team that ongoing faculty development is a salient feature of the institution involving both core and adjunct faculty. Yet the Team suggests that GSE give thought to and further develop the current model from a generalized professional development line in the budget for faculty and staff to one that affords more specificity and potentially equity in funding at the level of individual faculty and staff. (CFR 3.2, 3.3)

**Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources**

The Team was especially encouraged and impressed with the positive development in finances at GSE. The financial picture for the GSE appears to have substantially stabilized and improved since the CPR visit, while financial reporting standards remained strong. Independent financial audits were provided for 2012-2013 and for 2013-2014. The auditors expressed the opinion that the financial statements for both years presented fairly, in all material aspects and without qualification, the financial position of High Tech High Graduate School of Education. In separate analyses for both years, the auditors found no material weaknesses in the Institution’s financial controls.
The physical plant is also undergoing expansion: the GSE will soon move into its own new building. Through personal communication with Officers of the Board, Team members learned that the new building is a project funded through High Tech High with a highly favorable annual $40,000 leaseback of the property to the GSE.

The Visiting Team found that a robust business model has now been developed at GSE, one in which dissemination, professional development, outreach and hosted conferences now account for over 70 percent of income (EER, p.29). For example, the GSE Deeper Learning Conference, a 500-attendee event to take place at the new GSE building and surrounding classrooms, is already virtually sold out well in advance this year, and is being underwritten for the next four years by the Hewlett Foundation. This increased financial stability, in turn, has enabled the GSE to fund further developments and enhancements to the M.Ed. program, as outlined elsewhere in this report.

Student applications are significantly up for next year now that Title IV funding is available; applications and overall enrollment is projected to continue that rise through the forecasted period, enabling the institution not only to increase its revenue base from tuition numbers but to be able to institute a series of modest tuition increases that will eventually put the GSE closer to parity with similar institutions in the region. With the approval of the GSE for the SEVIS program, the institution is recruiting internationally for the M.Ed. as well as for its professional development programs.

The GSE gives ample evidence of its ongoing fundraising prowess through contracts and grants – current through the Walton Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, and ongoing interest from the Gates Foundation. Worth noting is that although the current net income projection in 2016-2017 displayed below shows as a deficit (reflecting
the end of a Walton Foundation grant), this projection does not reflect the effect of other grants and contracts currently in the pipeline, including a significant sole-source contract through the State of California. The total net of all revenues and expenses forecasted is positive for each year in that document, with the exception of a projected deficit in 2016-2017 as noted. The multi-year budget model presented forecasts revenue and expenses through 2019-2020.

High Tech High Graduate School of Education
Revenues and Expenditures Forecast by Period FY15 - FY20

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revenues</td>
<td>1,550,076</td>
<td>1,718,100</td>
<td>1,983,119</td>
<td>1,375,812</td>
<td>1,461,977</td>
<td>1,498,526</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expenditures</td>
<td>1,734,386</td>
<td>1,676,386</td>
<td>1,873,985</td>
<td>1,445,699</td>
<td>1,456,115</td>
<td>1,485,237</td>
<td>1,500,089</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Income</td>
<td>(184,310)</td>
<td>41,714</td>
<td>109,134</td>
<td>(69,887)</td>
<td>5,862</td>
<td>13,289</td>
<td>20,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting Net Assets</td>
<td>544,530</td>
<td>544,530</td>
<td>586,244</td>
<td>695,378</td>
<td>625,491</td>
<td>631,353</td>
<td>644,642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending Net Assets</td>
<td>360,220</td>
<td>586,244</td>
<td>695,378</td>
<td>625,491</td>
<td>631,353</td>
<td>644,642</td>
<td>665,557</td>
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The Team also learned of the GSE’s efforts to streamline its costs. In its EER document, the GSE noted the positive effect of a number of initiatives on its revenue stream as well as cost savings going forward. Most notably, a benchmarking/peer review of other M.Ed. programs to analyze credit hours, tuition and other factors provided clear data-based evidence for the merger of the Teacher Leadership and School Leadership programs, a move that has resulted in greater efficiency and reduced expenses.
Articulating current programs with credentialing programs will allow for additional revenue to be generated, as has the expansion of professional education and school transformation programs. Overall, the Team found the GSE to be in stable and progressively improving financial situation. (CFR 3.4)

Resource planning and budgeting at the GSE are based on a collaborative planning model that brings together the Dean, Program Directors, President, and CFO to revisit the GSE strategic plan and align initiatives/resource allocations in the budget with the directions established in the strategic plan. In discussions with faculty and administrators, Team members gained the impression that the budget planning process, while deeply collaborative, is at this point in the institution’s development fairly informal. That said, achievement of the GSE’s financial goals is evaluated as part of internal review processes through the Financial FAP evaluation, amongst other methods. (CFR 3.5)

The Annual FAP Evaluation Plan for the Academic Sector, 2013-2014 provides evidence of GSE’s continuing commitment to self-evaluation and improvement. As part of the annual evaluation, a satisfaction survey of students is conducted. Among other things, this survey looks at student satisfaction with support for information resources and for using technology/computer resources at the GSE. In the most recent survey, student satisfaction in these vital areas declined, even though in the case of information resources, students and faculty now have online access to over 1800 full text journals through ERIC and EBSCO Education Source, an expansion since the CPR visit. The GSE has taken a thoughtful, evidence-based and reflective stance towards improving information resources and information technology support to students, as evidenced in
the November 2014 Design Retreat notes, and more formally in the SFF Task Force Report 2013-2014. With regard to information resources, as the narrative in the Annual FAP Evaluation Plan for the Academic Sector 2013-2014 points out, increasing expectations for research and rigor are having the effect of pushing the demand for wider information resources. As the narrative also points out, it will be important to re-assess student perceptions to determine whether or not the enhanced facilities and infrastructure are having the desired effect.

The Visiting Team was impressed with the rigor of the evaluation approaches used in determining the adequacy of information and technological resources, for example in the annual faculty/staff surveys and annual student surveys. During the visit, the faculty and students stated that their information technology needs were being met in terms of systems, accounts, connectivity and such basic IT issues, however survey results indicated that this is an area in which satisfaction of students, faculty and staff was somewhat lower than in other areas. Planned facilities upgrades with the movement to the new building later in 2015 may address technology issues. Information resources are being met through expanded EBSCO host database access to over 1800 full-text journals and sources relevant to the discipline, as well as through utilization of cooperative agreements with other. While systems support is readily available, students turn to each other for much of their development in information literacy and quality of presentations in technical modalities, in alignment with the constructivist mission. As the institution continues to grow, the Team suggests that the institution engage in leading practices to provide information and technology resources and structures to sustain these programs and to create and maintain a graduate-level academic culture. (CFR 3.5)
Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes

The GSE has clearly documented roles, responsibilities, and lines of authority, specified in the Faculty and Staff Handbook, the Organizational Chart, and the Position Descriptions. Through the Institutional Review Process, collaborative efforts such as the Graduate Culture Task Force, and the ongoing review processes in place, the GSE demonstrates clear, collaborative and effective decision making in line with its purposes. As in the CPR review, Visiting Team members continued to be impressed with the spirit of collaboration in service of the mission in abundant evidence at GSE. (CFRs 3.6, 3.7)

The GSE has a full-time President/CEO, Dr. Rob Riordan. The President-Elect, Dr. Steve Hamilton, has been named as Director of Research for the 2014-2015 year. Team members applauded the way the transition is maximizing continuity of leadership. The CFO, Ms. Kay McElrath, operates as the full-time CFO of High Tech High but devotes the necessary time to the needs of the GSE. Team members found that this arrangement works well due to the embedded nature of the GSE within HTH. Position descriptions are provided for all major administrative functions, and further described in the updated Shared Services Agreement. Given the size and scope of GSE activities, Team members agreed that the current Shared Services agreement provides a viable and economical solution to most issues concerned with the provision of sufficient administrative support.

The Visiting Team reviewed a number of changes made by GSE to come into conformance with CFR and the WSCUC Policy on Independent Governing Boards. The Board has been expanded in size to eight members, including new members with deep and relevant higher education experience. Further expansion to ten members is
anticipated by July 2015. Committees of the Board have been expanded, in accordance with the WSCUC Policy on Independent Governing Boards, to include four committees: Audit, Finance, Nominating, and Academic Affairs. Independence of the governing board is now specifically addressed. Article 2, Section 2.1 of the Third Amended and Restated Bylaws provides that the Board, not the Sole Member, shall have the authority to appoint all directors, and that the Member shall have limited time and scope within which to submit an objection to nominees brought forward by the Nominating Committee of the Board. Further, Article 4, section 4.3 specifically notes that “Not more than forty-nine percent (49%) of the persons serving on the Board (or any committee of the Board) at any time may be interested persons.”

The newly revised and adopted Board Handbook states (p.2) that “The Board’s principal role will be in setting policy direction, defining policy standards, monitoring institutional performance and employing, supporting and evaluating the President.” The stated Board duties and responsibilities included in Section 2 now include the following: 2.5 “The Board is responsible for selecting, evaluating and setting compensation for the President.” The revised Faculty and Staff Handbook contains language in Section 7.5 that “Evaluation of the president is the responsibility of the Board of Directors. The Board conducts an annual review of the president's performance at its discretion, and may appoint an evaluation committee for that purpose, charged with the responsibility of gathering performance data, interviewing key personnel, and making recommendations to the Board as to the contract renewal or termination.” Both the President and the Board affirmed that a presidential evaluation had been performed in 2014. Board members indicated that an improved evaluation process based on specific performance targets and
goals from the new strategic plan would be included in the presidential evaluation process going forward, with the arrival of the new President.

To engage the Board in development as a governing board within the context of higher education, GSE engaged Dr. James Appleton. Dr. Appleton provided consultation at the Board Retreat in October 2014 and has since been engaged to provide both ongoing board development and strategic planning consultation to the Board. With the positive changes made to the structure, size and independence of the GSE Board of Trustees as well as the GSE Board of Trustees Bylaws and Board Policy Manual, Team members agreed that the changes made now bring the institution into conformance to the expectations established under the WSCUC Policy on Independent Governing Boards. (CFR 3.9, WSCUC Policy on Independent Governing Boards)

The Visiting Team noted the Commission’s recommendation regarding the creation and implementation of explicit procedures for faculty ownership of the curriculum. In the EER Report, the GSE has updated its Faculty and Staff Handbook (Section 6.3) to provide language that speaks to faculty involvement in all curricular matters and to faculty ownership of the curriculum: “GSE Faculty are expected to design and implement their own courses, self-evaluate, and participate, as a body, in standard-setting, syllabus design, program evaluation, and the evaluation of student work” and that “Core faculty are full participants in all GSE strategic planning and institutional review meetings and processes. Adjunct faculty are invited and encouraged, but not required, to participate in the design and implementation of these processes.” This language defines in policy the role of faculty in oversight of the curriculum and in the academic life of the institution. The GSE notes that faculty members participate fully in Program Reviews
and Task Forces aimed at ensuring academic quality and activities to sustain and develop the institution’s academic character.

While the GSE opined that “More formal governance structures and procedures (e.g., Faculty Senate) are inappropriate at this time, in view of the small size of the faculty” (p.44, EER Report), the Visiting Team found that a functional approach to faculty governance through an assembly or faculty of the whole approach is currently in operation at the institution. Faculty and administrators meet regularly as a committee of the whole. A recognizable process for new proposal development is in place though the creation of subcommittees. Systematic multi-voting on all new proposals is utilized to achieve consensus (or rework proposals where consensus cannot be achieved). Several task forces have been formed that faculty and administrators indicated would endure in committee form and function, including the Graduate Culture Task Force and the Diversity Task Force. Members of the Visiting Team agreed that basic tenets of faculty governance, such as faculty ownership of the academic programs and faculty representation in decisions that affect the institution, are currently being met at GSE through structures and processes that have developed organically to meet institutional needs and further the mission. (CFR 3.10)

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

Quality Assurance Processes

The culture at the GSE is highly participative and inclusive, and the institutional learning and improvement processes have been consistent with this culture. The GSE faculty support a problem based learning pedagogy and this framework was applied to
the assessment and quality assurance work. As noted in the EER, the GSE engages in multiple ways of collecting data and then intentionally reviews findings and responds to needs quickly (CFR 4.4). The EER report asserted full implementation of the Institutional Review Plan (CFR 4.1). The planning process was well defined and implemented. Evidence of assessment activities and collection of multiple sources of evidence through direct and indirect assessment methods were provided.

The first full cycle of institutional review at the GSE was completed in 2014-2015. This included the program review process, as well as alignment with the budget and the strategic planning process that is currently underway. The program review process was well articulated and included evaluation of academic, financial, and infrastructure sectors. The institutional review process included a review of student learning at the course, program, and institutional level. Annual assessment reports included goal statements, description of evidence, assessment of how completely the goals were met, and proposed action plans. The action plans detailed resources, budget line items, and other costs (CFR 4.1, 4.6).

**Institutional Learning and Improvement**

The Visiting Team found evidence and examples of lessons learned and changes implemented because of the institutional review process in multiple meetings with varied stakeholders across campus (CFR 4.3). The GSE administrators integrated the value of training reflective practitioners into their own process, whereby the faculty and administration are themselves reflective about and responsive to feedback. After every class, students complete exit cards to note burning questions; these are answered in the next session if not before (CFR 4.4). Course evaluations and LSW (Looking at Student
Work) informed significant curricular changes including development of syllabus templates, adjunct faculty teaching guidelines and tools, additional assessment around equity and social justice in the curriculum, and use of tools standardized within the program to structure student development called ‘Protocols’ (CFR 4.2, 4.4). Within the GSE programs, faculty and students spoke of structured pedagogy that created opportunities for deep learning, engagement with all stakeholders, and fostering reflective practice around student learning and improvement.

The faculty engaged in ongoing and frequent inquiry into their teaching and student learning. At the end of each class, each student completes an ‘exit card’ to note ‘take aways’ and burning questions. Faculty responded to the comments in the cards on the spot, in an email message, or with content or conversation in the subsequent class session. The Visiting Team learned from students that the faculty treated the students as respected colleagues, created a safe space for questions and discussion, and were open to course changes as needed to enhance student learning.

Each GSE course is led by faculty teams who used multiple forms of assessment to inform curricular design and pedagogy (CPR 4.4). The core and adjunct faculty regularly meet between each class to debrief and plan for the next class. Over 80% of students reported in annual surveys that the support to meet program requirements and complete their action research project was excellent. Faculty reported that direct assessment of student work influenced the faculty shared understanding of student success, and that this was an ongoing process. “We are still wondering how to best support students in engaging in rigorous, scholarly work that is rooted in practice with deep connections to the theory and research while also creating authentic products for the
audiences they most care about” (Self-Study for Teacher Leadership Program Review, p.6). The practice of meeting regularly to discuss and evaluate student work was commended by advisory board members from regional research universities as a promising practice toward continuous quality improvement and enhancing student success (CFR 2.6, 4.1-4.4).

The GSE recognized an important element of the campus culture is dialogical and reflective inquiry as well as shared governance and decision-making. Evidence suggested a positive relationship between the large volume of data collected, the inclusion of the six core faculty in task forces and committees, the assessment processes, and evidence based quality improvement (CFR 4.2). For example, faculty indicated that the program review process provided input from multiple stakeholders that led to the enhanced graduate culture in ways that permeated the curriculum and co-curricular activities. Improved rubrics were also reported to be helpful with clarifying expectations, especially around writing (CFR 4.1, 4.3, 4.4). Currently, the assessment workload is spread across the core faculty and staff. The Visiting team was impressed with the extensive process that has been established and embraced, but wonders if streamlining the process might make it more manageable.

In November 2014, a task force was formed to work with an external expert and create a new five-year strategic plan (CFR 4.1). The task force includes a representative from all stakeholder groups and is in the process of compiling data to answer key questions about impact, return on investment, partnerships, the context of higher education, and the marketplace (CFR 4.7). A summit is planned in May to include approximately 100 key constituents and this process will inform the plan that is due to the
executive leadership and board (CFR 4.5, 4.6). Board members have actively participated in the process. Having been through multiple strategic planning cycles, the President commented that this process has “felt very real,” a culmination of what was learned across the years of seeking accreditation. The process was funded by the Hewlett Foundation.

E. Program Review

Two program review processes were completed in 2014. The reports followed the program review guidelines established internally by the GSE and included a review of the extent that each program satisfied the five recommendations from The Commission Action Letter corresponding to the CPR Report that addressed academic issues. The reviews were each led by one highly qualified external reviewer. In the School Leadership report, the reviewer recommended clearer definitions of expectations around assignments, specifically, “a better definition of expectations will enhance the quality and consistency of each student product and project”. The Visiting Team found that all recommendations from the external reviewers were either implemented or in the process of implementation at the time of the EER site visit. This included revision of the curriculum toward a single M.Ed. program, scaffolding course assignments to teach rigorous academic writing skills, and revised rubrics coupled with clearer assignment expectations. Interviews with co-curricular directors during the site visit revealed that the program has an intentional pathway for students to participate in a wide range of professional development events in which students enthusiastically participate during and after program completion. The Visiting Team noted that explicit documentation of the expectations for learning outcomes through co-curricular activities and tracking
participation may bolster the outcome portfolio for students. The program director discussed several planned strategies to address the wide variation in higher levels of thinking and skills found in capstone projects. (CFR 2.7, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7)

Several benchmarking efforts have been integrated into the GSE assessment practices. (CFR 4.1) At the course level, students are required to spend 20% of their fieldwork hours in a non-High Tech High campus. The M.Ed. program reported and students confirmed that observing and participating across different campuses challenged their thinking and enhanced their learning experience. In another benchmarking effort at the program level, program directors built partnerships with other established research based and professional schools to receive feedback on program materials and student work. These other institutions advised on issues around implementation and sustainability, and also shared their own materials as models for the GSE to use. The GSE also completed professional standards crosswalks with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the Model Teacher Leader Standards. Finally, at the school level, some informal benchmarking was done. Last year, Dr. Steve Hamilton joined the GSE from his home institution before committing to transition to a full time position. His involvement from a Research 1 institution provided a new lens through which to view the GSE academic programs, mission, and outcomes. Dr. Hamilton indicated astonishment that multiple students reported just three months into their programs that assigned reading material, participation in class, and the application of theory to practice in the classroom had transformed their approach to teaching. He indicated, by contrast, that the same had not been expressed by students at his home institution, even after being in their graduate program for a longer period of time. This
observation was confirmed by the Scholar in Residence, who was trained at and was on sabbatical from another Research 1 institution.

The motto for the GSE is, “Teach, Lead, Transform.” The word transform emerged in videos on the institution’s website and also in survey information, reports, and in person meetings with core faculty, adjunct faculty, school site directors, staff, and students. The energy and enthusiasm that came through in meeting with stakeholders was unpacked during the site visit. The evidence that was shared demonstrated the embedded nature of assessment in the culture, whereby students, faculty, and directors seek feedback, faculty train students in professional critique, and expect ongoing ideas for improvement as part of the fabric of the institution. The Digital Portfolio capstone projects detailed research conducted by students and documented the effectiveness of the program for the students through application in their work. The visiting team heard repeatedly that the connections between theory and practice, scaffolding experiences, ongoing feedback, and strong peer support enabled students to find ways to transform their thinking, teaching, and impact on their own classrooms, students, parents, school directors, and teacher colleagues in their own school sites.

It is clear the GSE has done considerable work to assess programs and use evidence for improvement. Application of theWSCUC Rubrics for Program Review, Portfolios, and Capstones yielded ratings of Highly Developed across most criteria. Regarding Program Review, The Visiting Team concluded that the process was highly developed across all the required elements, process, annual feedback on assessment efforts, and student experience. The Visiting Team heard that the CFO and President
regularly discuss budget issues and plans, but it was unclear whether a formal process existed to integrate the program review findings into a budget planning process.

F. Student Success

The GSE has been heavily engaged in multiple initiatives to enhance the success of the students enrolled. The review team would like to acknowledge the many strategies that have been implemented to analyze relevant data and make use of the evidence to guide curricular reform. At the time of the CPR, a plan was in place but not enough time had passed to understand how the faculty and stakeholders could make use of the plan to authentically and systematically work toward ‘closing the loop’ in the assessment of student learning.

Overall, the completion rate for students noted in the Performance Fact Sheet for students entering between 2008 and 2012 was 86.7%. When disaggregated, the school leadership program had a lower completion rate (76%) as compared to the teacher leadership program (92%). The primary reason cited for student attrition was personal factors and discussion with administration revealed that the metric measured stop out as compared to drop out. Completion rates (reported at closer to 90%), equated to 2 out of 84 Teacher Leadership students as non-completers.

The GSE faculty and program director reported that significant personalized support was provided to students through personal mentoring relationships with the faculty, directors of school sites, advisors, and critical peers. Student survey findings and in-person interviews confirmed that students are satisfied with the support received. When asked what made them stay in the program, students who participated at the site visit reported that the program: offered a new way to think about things, effectively
taught how theory is backed by practice, provided a strong supportive cohort, taught students how to dissect readings, and helped students understand how to become a reflective practitioner. School directors who oversaw the student residencies reported that the students implemented transformative practices and shared resources that helped school sites achieve goals on a regular basis.

Many elements from theWSCUC Graduate Education Policy were addressed in the self-study report. This included application of knowledge in the field, conceptual mastery, and knowledge and skills to advance the profession. Evidence was provided that corresponded to several practices that AAC&U identified as ‘high impact’. The foundations course that was developed and first implemented as a summer intensive experience in 2015, effectively taught core skills for success in the M.Ed. program. During the on-site meeting with students, the course was referenced several times as providing meaningful activities for students to bond with their cohort. The course taught students scholarly routines that included: dialogical interview protocol, professional communication skills, and how to use a rubric to understand expectations and guide writing. Information literacy was introduced through partnership with UCSD, including a visit to the campus library and how to search for appropriate and academically rigorous peer reviewed articles. The foundations and subsequent courses provided students with problem based and applied learning experiences that were immediately applicable to the workplace and other new settings. Finally, students underscored the value of teamwork to build problem solving skills and the ability to more deeply understand course content. The evidence of student understanding and learning was evidenced in signature
assignments, capstone projects, digital portfolios, and forum discussions. (CFR 2.3, 2.5, 2.8-2.9)

Successful student research expectations were addressed from multiple perspectives. The GSE reported that thousands of educators from outside High Tech High participated in professional development opportunities including institutes, workshops, and residencies. The GSE students were encouraged to participate in the sessions and reflect on what was learned as a component of the program fieldwork experience. The students who were interviewed during the site visit unanimously reported that each of them participated in the workshops that were available and planned to do so after program completion. The GSE also created the position, Director of The Research Institute, charged with creating a hub for action research. To date, this includes identification of themes, clarification of appropriate methods, and publication in peer reviewed journals. Finally, the curriculum introduced seminal works and peer reviewed articles that provided multiple perspectives. As evidenced in course materials and student work, the GSE addressed the recommendation to create a graduate culture. (CFR 2.2b, 2.4, 2.6)

SECTION III – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CAPACITY AND PREPARATORY REVIEW AND THE EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

A. Commendations

The GSE is to be commended for their thorough response to recommendations from the CPR visit. They addressed each recommendation from the Commission, as well
as every recommendation embedded within the CPR Team Report. The GSE has clearly taken this process seriously and has made substantial changes since the last visit.

Significant efforts have been made to create a graduate culture including:

- Addition of the Core Values and Foundations course
- Implementation of faculty-led action research projects
- Inclusion of appropriate scholarly terminology throughout the program
- Access to key databases of peer reviewed journals and access to local university libraries
- Integration of seminal works and peer reviewed literature in the curriculum along with pedagogy to engage students in these topics
- Clarification of expectations through revised syllabi, improved rubrics, more detailed assignment explanations, and training for adjunct faculty.

The GSE has made good progress on their strategic planning initiative led by an external expert facilitator, including board involvement, and designed with special task force groups (graduate student culture, diversity, program restructuring).

The credit hour issue has been resolved through the development of a clear policy outlining credit hour assignments. There is greater clarity around instructor-led online work, supervised fieldwork, and internship hours. The addition of adjunct faculty funding was provided to support the added faculty expectations.

When the team visited for the CPR, the assessment cycle was well structured but not yet fully utilized and there was little data to analyze. The full and complete institutional review plan has now been authentically implemented including engagement at multiple points with faculty and key stakeholders to evaluate data, make evidence
based changes to the curriculum, and to identify effectiveness. Adjunct faculty and external advisory members are encouraged to assist core faculty with assessment of student work.

The GSE is near completion on a building with space for graduate courses and professional development programs embedded within a High Tech High elementary school and designed for graduate student engagement, with flexibility and state of the art space considerations.

A Research Institute has been established with a director, over 1.5 million dollars in funding, and development of faculty capacity to conduct improvement research projects in schools and to become a research hub. Relevance of research is evidenced by articles published in peer reviewed journals, partnerships with faculty from local major research universities, and presentations at top national conferences.

Completion of program review processes for both the Teacher Leadership and School Leadership programs resulted in the streamlining of both programs into a single M.Ed. program. This allows for more efficient administrative and curricular structures, resource reallocation of personnel, and stronger student cohort experiences.

B. Recommendations:

It is recommended that the GSE include in the Strategic Planning process considerations for addressing infrastructure and student service issues when the student population increases, including the administration of federal aid, SEVIS processing, and institutional research.

Clarification of faculty governance is needed in the faculty handbook, outlining committee structures and decision-making processes.
Faculty workloads need further clarification, including the definition of a full time teaching load, and the allocation of time expected for administrative duties and programs in professional education.
## 1 - CREDIT HOUR AND PROGRAM LENGTH REVIEW FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material Reviewed</th>
<th>Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy on credit hour</td>
<td>Is this policy easily accessible? X YES ☐ NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where is the policy located? Student Handbook (p. 17); Faculty and Staff Handbook (#4.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comments: The handbooks are accessible on the GSE website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour</td>
<td>Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)? X YES ☐ NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the institution adhere to this procedure? X YES ☐ NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comments: Credit hour assignments are reviewed during program review and every other year in the institutional review process. The first program reviews were completed last year, so this is a new process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet</td>
<td>Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? X YES ☐ NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comments:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses</td>
<td>How many syllabi were reviewed? N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.</td>
<td>What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What degree level(s)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What discipline(s)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? ☐ YES ☐ NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comments: The GSE does not offer any online or hybrid courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample syllabi or equivalent for other kinds of courses that do not meet for the prescribed hours (e.g., internships, labs, clinical, independent study, accelerated)</td>
<td>How many syllabi were reviewed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.</td>
<td>What kinds of courses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What degree level(s)? Master’s Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What discipline(s)? Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? X YES ☐ NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comments:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample program</td>
<td>How many programs were reviewed? One (there is only one degree program at GSE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information (catalog, website, or other program materials)</td>
<td>What kinds of programs were reviewed? <strong>The M.Ed. Program</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What degree level(s)? <strong>Master's Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What discipline(s)? <strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? <strong>X YES</strong></td>
<td><strong>☐ NO</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Review Completed By: Leanne Neilson
Date: March 6, 2015
2 - MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT REVIEW FORM
Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution’s recruiting and admissions practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material Reviewed</th>
<th>Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.</th>
<th>Verified Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Federal regulations</strong></td>
<td>Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comments: The GSE is in compliance with Title IV regulations regarding recruitment of students. No incentives are provided to employees or third parties for success in recruiting students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree completion and cost</td>
<td>Does the institution provide accurate information about the typical length of time to degree?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the institution provide accurate information about the overall cost of the degree?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comments: Information on degree completion and cost is readily available on the “Apply” page of the GSE website, accessible from the home page.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers and employment</td>
<td>Does the institution provide accurate information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the institution provide accurate information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*§602.16(a)(1)(vii)

**Section 487 (a)(20) of the Higher Education Act (HEA) prohibits Title IV eligible institutions from providing incentive compensation to employees or third party entities for their success in securing student enrollments. Incentive compensation includes commissions, bonus payments, merit salary adjustments, and promotion decisions based solely on success in enrolling students. These regulations do not apply to the recruitment of international students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive Federal financial aid.

Review Completed By: Leanne Neilson
Date: March 6, 2015
3 - STUDENT COMPLAINTS REVIEW FORM
Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution’s student complaints policies, procedures, and records.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material Reviewed</th>
<th>Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)</th>
<th>Verified Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy on student complaints</td>
<td>Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? <strong>Yes</strong>&lt;br&gt;Is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Where? <strong>Yes</strong>&lt;br&gt;Comments: The Complaints policy is located in the Student Handbook and the Course Catalog.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process(es)/procedure</td>
<td>Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? Please describe briefly: There are both informal and formal complaint procedures. If informal efforts at resolution are unsuccessful, then the formal process involves bringing grievances to the Student Grievance Committee <strong>Yes</strong>&lt;br&gt;Does the institution adhere to this procedure? There have been no student complaints to date. <strong>N/A</strong>&lt;br&gt;Comments: There have been no student complaints to date.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Records</td>
<td>Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? Where? <strong>N/A</strong>&lt;br&gt;Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? Please describe briefly: <strong>Yes</strong>&lt;br&gt;Comments: The institution has no records of student complaints because there have not been any complaints.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*§602-16(1)(ix)*
See also WASC Senior College and University Commission’s Complaints and Third Party Comment Policy.

Review Completed By: Leanne Neilson  
Date: March 6, 2015
## 4 – TRANSFER CREDIT REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulations*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution’s recruiting and admissions practices accordingly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material Reviewed</th>
<th>Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)</th>
<th>Verified Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Transfer Credit Policy(s) | Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit?  
Is the policy publically available? If so, where?  
Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? | N/A |

Comments: **The GSE does not accept transfer credits.**

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*§602.24(e): Transfer of credit policies. The accrediting agency must confirm, as part of its review for renewal of accreditation, that the institution has transfer of credit policies that--

1. Are publicly disclosed in accordance with 668.43(a)(11); and

2. Include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission’s Transfer of Credit Policy.  
Review Completed By: Leanne Neilson  
Date: March 6, 2015