REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM

CAPACITY AND PREPARATORY REVIEW

of

Brandman University
Irvine, California

March 21–23, 2012

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Team Roster

Kenyon S. Chan [Chair]
Chancellor, University of Washington, Bothell

Tomoko T. Takahashi [Assistant Chair]
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Soka University of America

Christine Geith
Assistant Provost and Executive Director, MSU Global
Michigan State University

Stephanie Juillerat
Executive Director, Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment
Azusa Pacific University

George R. Latter
Vice President for Finance, Administrative Services
Point Loma Nazarene University

Richard Winn
WASC Staff

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

OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

I. A. Description of Institution and Visit

Brandman University (formerly “Chapman University College”) is a private, nonprofit, co-educational institution of higher education offering undergraduate and graduate degrees, certificates, teaching credentials, and extended education programs, via distance learning and at 26 campuses throughout the states of California and Washington (with its main campus in Irvine, CA). A member of the Chapman University System, Brandman distinguishes itself by focusing on the non-traditional, adult student, while upholding its unique mission “to provide students with a dynamic education based on excellence and flexibility that creates lasting value and relevance for evolving careers.”

Brandman University currently offers 1 associate’s degree, 12 bachelor’s degrees, 13 master’s degrees, 2 doctoral degrees, 6 credential programs, and 18 credit-bearing certificate programs. These 52 programs in total are offered in Business and Professional Studies, Arts and Sciences, Nursing and Health Professions, and Education. Additionally, professional development and Continuing Education Unit (CEU) credits are offered through Extended Education. The University serves a total headcount of 2,897 undergraduate students (2,199 FTE), 254 non-degree students (116 FTE), and 6,849 graduate students (5,060 FTE), according to the Fall 2010 IPEDS data (as reported in the WASC Summary Data Form dated May 2011 submitted with the CPR Report). The faculty consists of 68 full-time and over one thousand part-time instructors (393.73 FTE), totaling 461.73 FTE faculty members, according to the Fall 2010 IPEDS data. These data indicate that Brandman has an overall student-
faculty ratio of 11:1. In 2010, a total of 23 Associate’s, 869 Bachelor’s, and 1,027 Master’s
degrees were awarded (Fall 2010 IPEDS data).

Brandman University originally began with the first adult program established by
Chapman University at El Toro Marine Air Station in 1958. Initially known as the Residence
Education Center Program and later named “Chapman University College,” the program
served Marine Air Station military personnel. Over time additional campuses were established
on other installations, and more programs were added in order to meet the educational needs
of military personnel as well as those of non-military adult learners.

In 2006, Chapman University College began the process of becoming a separate entity
of Chapman University, and WASC approved the structural change that it become a
separately accreditable unit and operationally distinct from the Orange Campus of Chapman
University, effective June 1, 2008. In September 2009, with a significant naming gift, the
institution’s name was changed to “Brandman University.”

Since it became Brandman University, the institution has added several more
programs. In January 2010, it began offering new fully online and blended undergraduate and
graduate degrees in Business, and a blended graduate degree in Public Administration. In
August 2010, the University started its first doctoral program, Doctor of Nursing Practice
(DNP), and in January 2011, it initiated a Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. In July
2011, WASC approved Brandman’s second doctoral program, Doctor of Education (EdD) in
Organizational Leadership, which will be initiated in August 2012. In December 2011, WASC
also approved Brandman’s proposal to enter into a new joint venture with Immersion
Education Services LLC (IES) for the formation of Ameritas College (formerly “Esperanza
College”) to serve Spanish-speaking college students starting in August 2012.
Brandman University is now seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation. Toward this end, it produced the required Institutional Proposal (accepted in May 2010) and subsequently submitted the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) Report in preparation for the CPR site visit, which took place March 21–23, 2012. The CPR visit was conducted at the main campus in Irvine, CA. The Team intends to visit selected off-campus sites prior to the EER visit scheduled for Fall 2013.

I. B. The Institution’s Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) Report

Alignment with the Institutional Proposal (IP)

The CPR Report submitted in preparation for the March 2012 visit was found to be well aligned with the goals proposed in the Institutional Proposal (IP). The Visiting Team also found the Report extremely well prepared and organized, clearly written, and easily readable.

Brandman has chosen a theme-based approach for its reviews with the following two themes as the intended outcomes of IP: (1) Attaining student success; and (2) Building an effective learning community through communication. The two themes identified and addressed are relevant, and the research questions are of importance to the newly structured institution with its unique program mix, delivery model, distributed campus system, and adult-learner student population.

Quality and Rigor of the Review and Report

Overall, the CPR Report adequately portrays the condition of the institution. The Visiting Team found some areas unclear due to missing information—e.g., information focusing on each off-site campus. The Report itself does not fully discuss, for example, how
the institution’s 26 campuses are managed. The additional information provided prior to the visit and the information and observations obtained on site helped the Visiting Team become better informed about the institution itself, the management of its off-site campuses, the progress it has made, and its challenges and opportunities.

The CPR Report addresses and discusses the two themes at structural and procedural levels (“how”—e.g., how surveys/policies/SLOs were developed and used) much deeper than at capacity and delivery levels (“what”—e.g., what the survey results were; what was actually attained through the process described). For example, the Report details the processes and steps taken to put into place a robust program of assessment and evaluation, but it provides little concrete evidence of how this all works in practice and demonstrates institutional capacity. During the CPR visit, therefore, the Visiting Team focused on the assessment of what had been developed and how it worked at capacity levels.

Similarly, the CPR Report describes “how” recommendations for improvement are made in some areas, but it is not clear “what” kinds of recommendations were actually made—e.g., what the institution plans to learn from the reviews and where improvements are necessary. Overall, the narrative essay does not highlight recommendations for improvement resulting from its self-review. Nevertheless, the CPR Report demonstrates a diverse spectrum of substantive engagement with the key issues for a direct impact on improvement in faculty, student, course, program, and university outcomes. During the CPR visit, therefore, the Visiting Team’s on-site reviews and interviews with the campus community were geared toward the verification of actual engagement. (CFR 4.1, 4.6, 4.7)

The review on site was conducted with much rigor and openness. Representatives of the campus leadership and community interacted and communicated with the Visiting Team
in a candid manner. (CFR 1.9) The Team was particularly impressed with the enthusiastic participation of a large number of full-time faculty members as well as students in the open meetings held by Team members during the visit. Uniformly, across all the interviews, the Team was engaged with a university community that takes seriously its vision, mission, and values. (CFR 1.1, 1.2)

The Team commends the Brandman University community for its deep engagement in the accreditation process and the amount of time and treasure it has invested in the process. The Team would also like to express its appreciation to the Brandman community for the openness with which they responded to questions and the provision of additional materials as requested as well as for their extraordinary effort in making the site visit exceptionally well organized and hospitable.

I. C. Response to Previous Commission Issues

The WASC Commission letter dated 7/3/2007 outlines a number of issues that needed to be addressed as Brandman began to separate from Chapman. The issues were specified in the following five areas: 1) Governance leadership structures of the newly-separate entity; 2) Marketing strategies, public announcements, diploma naming, and related aspects of the identity of the newly-separate entity vis-à-vis its partner entity on the Orange campus; 3) Effectiveness of the allocation of administrative, service units (both shared and separate) and staff resources; 4) Strategies to ensure equity of student support and parity of degree value for the two entities; 5) Student notification of the transition.

The CPR Report notes that these five areas were addressed at the 1/28/2009 Substantive Change Visit. WASC subsequently confirmed in its 2/10/2009 letter that
Brandman “has addressed in a satisfactory manner all planning and resource issues that were identified…. These matters were all found during the site visit to have been adequately addressed.”

During the CPR visit, the Visiting Team focused on the progress made in the specific areas that relate to Brandman’s separation from Chapman and the nature of its relationship with Chapman. Consequently, the Team found the separation from Chapman University proceeding well. The two institutions remain connected under the Chapman University System banner, but Brandman University has nearly total autonomy to innovate in the higher education landscape that they view as their mission. Brandman University believes that its association with Chapman is very important in lending it as a new institution immediate credibility among faculty, students, staff, and their communities.

The Chancellor of Brandman University and the President of Chapman University report an excellent relationship with strong communications and collaboration. Many of the senior leadership at Brandman worked at Chapman, which have been an important factor in the smooth separation of the institutions.
SECTION II

EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY UNDER THE STANDARDS

II. A. Institutional Capacity

II. A. 1. Organizational Capacity

Institutional Purposes

Brandman University has a well-articulated vision, mission, and value statement that is pervasive in the institution’s publications and public presentations, and more importantly, in the culture of the University. (CFR 1.1, 1.2)

Conversations with many individuals through different segments of the institution confirmed a full appreciation for the Brandman mission that appears to guide their work. The Team prodded individuals about the concentrated focus on adult learners to see how deep the commitment to the mission pervades the institution, and it was found that understanding and commitment to the Brandman mission and values run deep within the organization. Many staff members at all levels reported that they came to Brandman because of its unique commitment to adult higher education. (CFR 1.1)

The Visiting Team was particularly interested in the commitment to the vision, mission, and values of Brandman at the off-site levels as well. Through interviews with selected off-site staff, the Team found that the vision, mission, and values of the University are well understood and supported at the many off-site locations. In addition, the Team was impressed by the multiple methods used by the institution to communicate across the 26 sites. Site directors travel to Irvine several times a year for meetings and training. Senior leadership
visits off-site campuses regularly. Video conferencing is used extensively to hold multiple-site meetings about many subjects. (CFR 1.1)

**Governance and Decision-Making Processes**

As a member of the Chapman University System, Brandman University is governed by a Board of Regents that are “appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Board of Trustees of Chapman University, and may be removed and replaced by the Board of Trustees of Chapman University, at any time.” The President of Chapman University is, by bylaw, a Regent *ex officio* (with right to vote) of the Board of Regents of Brandman University. Furthermore, the institution’s bylaws cite at least a majority of the Regents and also include members of the President’s Cabinet or Board of Governors of Chapman University in addition to also being members of Chapman University’s Board of Trustees. The remaining Regents are appointed by Chapman, following a process in which they have been identified, vetted, and recommended by Brandman’s Board of Regents. If Brandman University were to be dissolved, all assets would be distributed to Chapman University. Chapman also shares in any annual surplus generated by Brandman. (CFR 3.8, 3.9)

Based on discussions with existing Regents who are not Chapman board members, it was found, while the Chapman Board has ultimate control over the governance of Brandman University (and in that sense is not completely autonomous or independent), the Regents operate with the best interests of the institution in mind and are highly engaged in the mission and strategic plan of the institution. Development of the Regents happens through both an initial orientation as well as an ongoing flow of information from the Chancellor regarding
current events and challenges in higher education and their relevance to the institution. (CFR 3.8, 3.9)

**Leadership and Organizational Structures**

Brandman University has a strong administrative structure in place. The biographies of the senior leadership team, particularly the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor for Finance & Administration, indicate that they have extensive, relevant experience. The Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor for Enrollment and Student Affairs were both employed by Chapman University for a number of years prior to moving to the institution. (CFR 1.3, 3.10)

Discussions with other staff members below the vice chancellor level revealed that these individuals are also highly qualified for the various positions they have been hired into, that they strongly embrace the mission of the institution, and that what attracted them to the institution was its “start-up” nature and the opportunity this presented for personal and professional creativity and growth. (CFR 1.3, 3.2)

The institution is organized in a typical manner with a Chancellor and four Vice Chancellors: 1) Academic Affairs, 2) Finance and Administration, 3) Enrollment and Student Affairs, and 4) Marketing and Communications. Under the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Brandman has four schools each led by Deans: 1) Arts and Sciences, 2) Business and Professional Studies, 3) Education, and 4) Nursing and Health Professions. A fifth dean for Extended Education that offers certificates, authorizations, credit-bearing and non-credit courses, is also part of the organizational structure. The other vice chancellors have divisions reporting to those that are typical of most universities. (CFR 1.3, 3.8)
Brandman University is a multi-campus “distributed-campus system” consisting of 26 different campus sites and online options. Each site has a campus director that is supervised by two regional directors who report to the Vice Chancellor for Enrollment and Student Affairs. According to a document provided to the Visiting Team by the institution, campuses are linked carefully to the central office for all parts of its enterprise. The central Human Resources Department coordinates policies and procedures across all the campuses. HR records for all campuses are secured at the central office. HR-related issues arising from the campuses are resolved with the assistance and consultation with the central office. (CFR 3.3, 3.8)

**Faculty and Staff**

In academic matters, the Office of Academic Affairs and Deans are responsible for the academic programs at the campuses. The Vice Chancellor works closely with the Deans to develop and assess all current academic programs. This is assisted by a very strong Institutional Assessment and Planning office, Academic Administration office, Institutional Research and Planning office, and the Center for Instructional Innovation (CII). Consideration and development of new academic programs add faculty leadership, the Vice Chancellors for Enrollment and Student Affairs, the Vice Chancellor for Marketing and Communications, and their staffs to the academic affairs team. (CFR 3.11, 4.5, 4.6)

Although the campus directors report to the Vice Chancellor for Enrollment and Student Affairs, they are also consulted about developments within academic affairs. The Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs appoints a subset of campus directors to the Directors’ Academic Advisory Committee (DAAC) that serves as a representative group of campus
directors that advise the Vice Chancellor. The Vice Chancellor for Enrollment and Student Affairs and the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Administration also attend the DAAC meetings. (CFR 4.8)

The academic deans also have direct contact with campus directors and academic advisors. Each dean holds a quarterly webinar with campus directors and academic advisors and meets for biannual campus directors meetings and campus advisors meetings. During team interviews, there was uniform enthusiasm for the level of communications within academic affairs across the many campus sites. (CFR 3.8)

The institution’s CPR Report indicates: “Since 2006, full-time faculty lines have increased by 40% demonstrating the University’s commitment to full-time faculty” (p. 4). While this is a significant increase on a percentage basis, it represents an increase in the headcount of only about 20 full-time faculty, and in the 2010–11 academic year, full-time faculty represented just 5.6% of total faculty headcount (76 of 1,362) (WASC Data Exhibits Table 4.1A). It is vitally important that the institution ensure that it employs a faculty with substantial and continuing commitment to the institution. The Visiting Team recommends that the University look for ways of valuing and honoring the work of adjuncts and their continuing commitment to the institution. (CFR 3.2)

II. A. 2. Financial Capacity

Fiscal Resources

The most significant advantage the institution enjoys from a financial perspective is that Chapman University is its parent corporation. Chapman has a very strong balance sheet with healthy reserves and enjoys a solid credit rating. Because of the institution’s
organizational relationship to Chapman University, the financial position and results of the two universities are combined in their audited financial statements. (CFR 3.5)

Relying on separate, unaudited financial statements provided by the institution, it appears that, for the fiscal year ended May 31, 2011, it had an increase in unrestricted net assets of approximately $2.5 million, resulting in an unrestricted net income ratio of 3.2% (good) and a return on unrestricted net assets ratio of 17.2% (very good). These results were in spite of a significant negative variance to budget in graduate tuition revenue. Two other financial ratios, both of which measure financial strength, were not as good. The viability ratio, which measures the institution’s ability to pay off its debt using expendable assets, was .63 (a ratio of 1.2 or greater is desirable), and the primary reserve ratio, which measures the institution’s ability to pay operating expenses in the event revenues are interrupted, was .10 (a ratio of .40 or greater is desirable). It should be noted that both of these ratios were higher than they were at May 31, 2010, as a result of the institution increasing its expendable net assets during the 2010–11 fiscal year. If the institution were a completely stand-alone university, these low viability and primary reserve ratios would be cause for some concern. However, with the considerable strength of Chapman University standing behind it, any “going concern” risks the institution has are considerably reduced. (CFR 3.5)

The institution’s total annual operating budget for 2011–12 is $90.6M, 99% of which comes from tuition and fees (Summary Data dated May 2011). A review of the operating results as of January 31, 2012, shows that the institution is, again, well below its budget in graduate tuition revenue, and is also slightly under budget in undergraduate tuition revenue. The negative variance in graduate tuition revenue is largely due to a 20% reduction in enrollment in the teacher education program, a challenge that has been similarly experienced
at nearly all other universities in California due to state-wide teacher layoffs. Part of the resulting revenue decline has been offset by lower instructional costs due to the need for fewer classes in this program. In addition, the institution has implemented other cost saving measures, including reduced travel and a conversion to a Voice over IP (VoIP) telephone system (at a reported savings of $233,000 annually). As a result, the finance and budget staff expect that the institution will end the year at or ahead of its budgeted bottom line. One of the strategies the institution is pursuing in order to reduce the future volatility in tuition revenue is to expand the number and types of programs offered so as to better diversify its sources of revenues. (CFR 3.5)

The institution is continuing the process of becoming less dependent on Chapman University for various assets and support services. With the implementation of a new ERP this year, services like accounting and payroll will be performed independently, which will also decrease the service fee the institution has been paying to Chapman. Ultimately, the institution expects that the only services it will receive from Chapman will be in three areas where economies of scale can benefit both universities: (1) library services, (2) insurance, and (3) employee benefits. (CFR 3.5)

II. A. 3. Physical Capacity

Physical Resources

Brandman owns or leases classroom and office space at 20 non-military locations in California and has the free use of classroom space at nine other sites, mostly military, at which it offers classes. The biggest challenge the institution currently has is significant excess capacity at most of its leased sites, mostly as a result of the shrinkage in enrollments in its
teacher education programs. Most leases are for seven to ten years in length, and the plan is to reduce the amount of space being leased when each lease reaches the end of its current term. In most cases these are full service leases, which eliminates the need for the campus directors or others to worry about janitorial and maintenance issues. All classrooms are outfitted with white boards and multimedia equipment (observed at Irvine during the CPR visit, and to be observed at other campus sites prior to the EER). With so many campuses, an ongoing challenge is keeping up-to-date in classroom technology. (CFR 3.6)

From a staffing standpoint, each campus site contains a campus director, one or more academic advisors, one or more “one-stop” specialists, and one or more faculty services specialists, in addition to full- and part-time faculty. At most sites, there is also a Community & Corporate Relations (CCR) person who is responsible for outreach and business development. (CFR 2.13)

Information Resources

The institution has established its own Information Technology (IT) department and has completed a three-year strategic plan that is aligned with that of the University. According to the Associate Vice Chancellor of Information Technology, the IT department has already completed or made substantial progress on nearly half of the objectives contained in that plan. The institution has made a strategic decision to obtain and support much of its IT infrastructure through relationships with outside vendors using service level contracts. This appears to be a cost effective solution that also meets the needs of a very distributed campus system. The most significant challenge to the IT group at the present time is the implementation of a new Banner ERP system, much of which is scheduled to go live summer
2012. The IT department and selected users indicate that this implementation is proceeding on schedule, although the IT department is seeking to obtain more programming assistance (on a contract basis) to help ensure timelines are met. (CFR 3.6, 3.7)

Brandman University shares library resources with Chapman but employs its own librarians to provide library services to the Brandman community. Two full-time librarians and one library assistant stationed at the Chapman library provide service and support exclusively to Brandman students, faculty, and staff. Brandman is currently in the process of filling another full-time position with a librarian with bilingual skills to support Spanish-speaking students in the Ameritas program, which is scheduled to launch in August 2012. (CFR 1.5, 3.2, 3.6)

The following library services are provided by the Brandman librarians: (1) course-specific synchronous library instruction sessions for on-site and online classes; (2) reference assistance 7 days a week; (3) individual research consultations; (4) online research guides and video tutorials to support asynchronous information literary instruction; (5) interlibrary loan; and (6) document delivery (items delivered directly to patrons’ homes). In addition to these services, Brandman students, faculty, and staff have access to the majority of physical and electronic resources made available through Chapman’s well-established library collection. This is another advantage the institution enjoys from its partnership with Chapman University. (CFR 2.13, 3.6)
II. B. Theme One: Attaining Student Success

II. B. 1. Scholarship & Creativity in Teaching and Learning

Innovation and the scholarship of teaching are integral to Brandman’s definition of itself, as indicated in its mission and values, and its expectations of faculty. After discussions with full-time and adjunct faculty along with the staff in the Center for Instructional Innovation (CII), the Team found that the institution provides significant support in the area of instructional effectiveness and associated technologies. (CFR 2.8)

As an example, the University has recently created the CII, with a full staff of instructional developers, each of whom is assigned to a school to work alongside faculty who are designing courses or transitioning from a blended course to an online environment. This support extends to adjunct faculty as well. CII staff report a collegial and effective relationship with faculty, who are the content experts, and instructional technologists, who upload the course into its online format. Conversations with full-time and adjunct faculty confirm this effective relationship, as faculty noted that the CII staff at Brandman is highly responsive. Another example of support is the recently created three-week course, designed to prepare new faculty to teach effectively in an online environment. The online course content, which includes instruction with applied assignments and feedback, was being piloted at the time of the team visit but so far has been well received. (CFR 2.8)

Other forms of support include an annual stipend of $1,200 for full-time faculty to attend professional conferences and stay current in their field. More money ($2,000) is allocated if faculty are presenting at these conferences. (CFR 3.4) It should be noted that this stipend does not extend to adjunct faculty, who comprise more than 90% of undergraduate credit hours taught (WASC Data Exhibits, Table 6.1) and 85% of FTE at the graduate level.
(Table 5). Brandman University is encouraged to consider ways to provide to its long-term adjuncts opportunities for professional development that will positively impact student learning. (CFR 3.2, 3.4)

Additional forms of support for scholarship and creative activities include topics related to professional development presented at the annual meetings and occasional brown bag lunches. CII staff report that local campuses also conduct workshops for its faculty, but the content appears to be predominantly linked to teaching. (CFR 2.8, 2.9)

In evaluating Brandman’s capacity to support scholarship and creative activities, it is important to recognize that the institution defines scholarship in the context of teaching. This focus may be appropriate given Brandman’s mission; however, the apparent lack of support for development in research or professional writing is worth noting. Although the Boyer model is referenced in Brandman’s CPR Report and verbally in conversation with the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, the University seems to limit its support of scholarship to activities that ultimately impact the quality of teaching. In that regard, Boyer’s scholarship of discovery and scholarship of application are neither encouraged nor required of its faculty, including those who teach in doctoral programs. While faculty are evaluated on their currency in their field, both the requirement and the associated support for scholarship links most closely to activities that positively impact student learning. The Visiting Team suggests a re-evaluation of this practice if doctoral programs continue to be added. (CFR 2.8, 2.9)

II. B. 2. Program Learning Outcomes & Stakeholders

Brandman University is to be commended on the establishment of a curriculum design and assessment model that is uniformly adopted across the institution. When new programs
are created and programs are reviewed, the process requires stakeholder feedback in ways appropriate for each program and for requirements of professional accreditation for nursing and education, for example. The five-step new program curriculum development process utilizes university-wide involvement and strategic planning to such a degree that the learning outcomes, signature assignments, rubrics, and assurance of learning standards are in place prior to the program’s initiation. The use of external stakeholder feedback in the development of programs is to be commended. (CFR 2.4, 4.4, 4.7, 4.8)

In addition to the process established for new programs, existing programs have also been re-structured to include program learning outcomes, all of which are mapped to the curriculum, and each of which have at least one signature assignment and corresponding 4-point rubric for assurance of student learning. The process of an annual or two-year cycle assessment of program learning outcomes and reporting results in a Template Report is becoming standard practice, although demonstrating how the data is used to close the loop and improve effectiveness will be an important next step. In discussions with both full-time and adjunct faculty, the Visiting Team verified that the process of using rubrics with signature assignments had authentic value for programs and was viewed positively. The institutional support given to faculty through the provision of data from the Office of Institutional Planning was noted. (CFR 2.8, 4.4, 4.6)

Materials provided by the University indicate that program review had been conceptualized but that refinement is necessary. Yet to be implemented is a program review process that will dovetail with the annual reporting of program learning outcomes. Also yet to be fully implemented is a process to ensure that courses meet the University Credit Hour Policy. (See Appendix A for credit hour review conducted during the visit.) Brandman plans
to have one program from each school engage in a program review cycle prior to the EER visit, which may give some initial indicator of effectiveness but will need more time and data to ensure the process works. (CFR 4.3)

**II. B. 3. General Education Revision**

In addition to the assessment of program learning goals, Brandman University has institutionalized the assessment of general education and institutional learning outcomes (ILO) through the use of common rubrics across all courses that contain a signature assignment for these outcomes. It’s notable that that Brandman faculty not only implemented common grading rubrics, but they also embedded the general education and ILO’s in upper-division courses in order to ensure they are achieved with transfer students. Curriculum maps noting the ILO’s have been completed for each program. By Fall 2012, courses will begin to implement signature assignment rubrics that include program learning outcomes (PLO’s) and ILO’s. This is a tremendous undertaking by the faculty and an indicator of the capacity of Brandman faculty and administrators to effectively collaborate, plan and deliver. It is also an example of the organization’s practice of first identifying available best practices and models, in this case the AAC&U LEAP and the Lumina Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP), and then adapting the models for their own use. (CFR 2.2a, 2.4, 4.4)

**II. B. 4. Effective Advising**

The institution has developed a strong advising model to meet the needs of non-traditional adult learners in a distributed-campus system. In this “dual” advising model, each student is assigned to a professional advisor and a faculty mentor. The professional advisor provides general support, assists with course sequencing, and navigation of university policies.
and procedures. The faculty mentor provides support related to the professional field and academic issues. (CFR 2.12, 2.13, 2.14)

The institution has approximately 55 advisors (mostly full-time), and each one advises about 150 students across the programs and disciplines. This “generalist” approach is made possible and effective by the rigorous training programs put in place by the institution. (CFR 3.4)

The advisors interviewed on site and via videoconferencing during the visit were found to be professional, knowledgeable, well informed, passionate about the university mission to serve non-traditional adult learners, and dedicated to the institution. It was also apparent that communication among the advisors across all campuses was frequent and effective. Their collaborative efforts and information sharing and analyses have improved their advising model over the years. (CFR 3.1, 3.4)

The students interviewed on site praised their advisors as “accessible,” “flexible,” and “caring.” Levels of their clear understanding of program requirements, course sequencing, and time to complete also indicated the effectiveness of the institution’s advising service. Students’ positive experience with this advising model was also evidenced in the advising assessment survey conducted in Spring 2011. (CFR 1.7, 2.10, 2.12)

It is commendable that Brandman has made great efforts to ensure students understand program requirements and receive timely advisement at multiple levels and to help them complete their programs in a timely fashion. (CFR 2.12, 2.13, 2.14)
II. B. 5. Assessment-Based Decision-Making

Brandman has a strong emphasis on empirical evidence for institutional improvement and robust assessment and institutional research capacity. A culture of evidence was very evident among Brandman faculty and staff across all functions. The systems and procedures used by Brandman to ensure academic quality, review faculty, assess learning outcomes, and to understand the needs of students, alums and stakeholders, use data in decision making. Institutional Key Performance Indicators (KPI) indicate strategic priorities, cyclical trends and issues. Among the KPI’s are student learning outcomes, the metric for which is still being finalized. (CFR 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8)

A diverse team of institutional research and institutional assessment personnel collaborates to support these processes and to work closely with the Vice Chancellor, who sets the tone for data-driven decisions. The cross-unit team combines budget, strategic, academic, marketing, enrollment, and course assessment data to create dashboards and deep dives for issues, to spot trends, and to forecast retention and enrollment. The team also facilitates academic processes by, for example, populating the data in annual program review reports. The staff report that their capacity will be greatly enhanced when the current transition to Banner is complete. (CFR 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8)

Institutional data is broadly and frequently shared among administrators and campuses. Faculty report using data when reviewing programs, revising courses, and mentoring faculty. (CFR 4.6, 4.7, 4.8)
II. B. 6. Student Success

Brandman University has a well functioning enrollment management team consisting of professionals in the areas of outreach, admissions, financial aid, enrollment, and retention. Goals for student success are established and reviewed by the team based on the student data on their achievement, satisfaction, and needs, which help the enrollment management team make well-informed data-driven decisions for constant improvement. (CFR 1.2, 2.10, 4.4)

The institution has a robust program of assessment and evaluation and collects and analyzes student data for various groups of students including different demographic groups, degree levels, and majors. (CFR 2.10, 4.5) It is also well evidenced that the data is shared with the public/students. (CFR 1.2, 1.7)

The institution has developed a solid and innovative system of measuring student achievement. Despite the difficulty of benchmarking due to the unique nature of non-traditional adult learners and transfer students it serves as well as that of the innovative instructional delivery modalities it uses, the institution has done an admirable job benchmarking its curricula against comparable traditional on-ground programs. The six-year graduation rate for the 2004 cohort graduating by 2010, for instance, shows 68%, which is on a par with comparison-group on-ground institutions. (CFR 2.7, 4.4)

It is notable that under-represented ethnic groups such as Hispanic and African American students have shown steady increases in graduation rates—e.g., the six-year completion rate of Hispanic cohort has risen from 64.25% (historical average of 1999–2002 cohorts) to 70.7% (2004 cohort). (CFR 1.5)
For benchmarking purposes, the institution participates in the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE), which tracks transfer-student graduation rates for 117 participating institutions. The 2011 CSRDE study results indicate that Brandman excels in comparison to institutions with the same Basic Carnegie Classification in terms of transfer-to-graduation rates for community-college transfer-in students. Similarly, according to the 2010 CSRDE Annual Report, in terms of its one-year retention rates, Brandman was found to be superior to other schools with the same Basic Carnegie Classification. (CFR 2.7, 4.4)

II. C. Theme Two: Building an Effective Learning Community Through Communication

II. C. 1. Institutional Reflection, Planning and Continuous Improvement

Strategic Plan

Strategic planning is central to Theme Two of this review. The institution has a well-written strategic plan covering the years 2011–12 through 2013–14. The plan includes a statement of vision, mission, and values, a market and competitor analysis, a SWOT analysis, and specific goals and strategies to be pursued. (CFR1.1, 4.1, 4.2)

The University has a well-publicized plan that is reviewed and updated annually. It also has a detailed process to engage its university community in the strategic planning process. According to meetings with numerous individuals during the visit, this strategic plan was developed with the assistance of and input from employees throughout the institution and the Board of Regents, and the goals and objectives described therein are the basis for most of the planning and budgeting efforts that take place throughout the year. (CFR 4.1, 4.2)

The development of the current plan began in late 2008 and continues to this date. Initially, the current plan was developed with input from a variety of stakeholders, including
the Board of Regents, the administration, faculty, staff, students, and alumni. This plan set the stage for renaming the university and setting a common statement of vision, mission and core values. (CFR 4.8)

The plan is reviewed annually by the Deans’ Council and updated according to data provided on student success, enrollments, organizational capacity, and similar indicators. The Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs then presents the proposed strategic plan to the Directors Academic Advisory Committee (DAAC), which is a representative body of the campus directors. The Deans and Faculty Assembly President discuss the proposed annual update with faculty during a fall retreat. Finally, the proposed updated plan is vetted by senior staff and sent for approval by the Board of Regents. After approval by the Board of Regents, the Chancellor presents the plan to the university community via a webinar and places the approved plan within the context of the vision, mission, and core values of the institution. (CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.8)

In discussing this process with members of the university community, the Team found that all levels of the organization interviewed had a good understanding of the strategic planning process and the content of the current strategic plan. Days before the team visit, the entire university staff, including off-site staff, met with the Chancellor in person or via webinar to discuss the strategic plan recently updated and approved by the Regents. This annual event is well attended and expected by the community. Although faculty are not required to attend the campus-wide webinar, it was reported to the Visiting Team that many faculty were informed about the strategic plan through the webinar and other means. Faculty and faculty leadership reported adequate engagement with the process. (CFR 4.1, 4.2)
The institution has a written document describing its budget process and schedule that references its strategic plan and priorities. The annual revenue budget is based on enrollment targets that have been established in a collaborative process, and the expenditure budget is based on input from site, program, and department directors (all within the context of the strategic and enrollment plans), in some cases using enrollment or other metrics to help determine the allocation of resources. The summarized budget is constructed using a series of Excel spreadsheets. (CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)

Learning Plan

All employees (faculty and staff) have a Learning Plan established for them. This consists of basic information for all employees plus content that can be customized based on the needs of the specific employee. Some of this training is available through MyWindow, the institution’s portal, or through webinars. Additional training is conducted face-to-face, either at the individual campus sites or by bringing employees to Irvine. In some cases employees may attend professional development opportunities conducted by outside organizations, available budget permitting. (CFR 3.4)

Faculty Evaluation

Brandman University has recently (2010–2011) revised its faculty evaluation system, which now connects the annual workload proposal with a triangulated process of review at the end of a data collection cycle. According to the Faculty Manual and a document entitled “Guidelines and Criteria for the Annual Evaluation of Full-time Faculty,” faculty are evaluated across three categories of performance (teaching, mentoring, service), each of which is weighted differently and ultimately scored by the Dean on a 5-point scale (1 = well below
expectations to 5 = well above expectations). The elements upon which faculty are evaluated appear to fit the mission of Brandman University, in which teaching effectiveness and innovation carry significant weight in the scoring. The institution uses a triangulated approach toward evaluation, where a Faculty Personnel Committee member (fellow faculty), Associate Dean, and Dean evaluate the evidence and discuss a faculty member’s performance. In the evaluation process, faculty have opportunity to reflect on their data as it relates to an assessment of their performance. (CFR 3.2, 3.3, 3.4)

Discussions with various faculty groups indicate that when used as intended (e.g., fully triangulating), the new system provides clarity in expectation and process and has resulted in more succinct evidence collection. As with any quantitative system, some faculty noted that an over-reliance on numerical data for the provision of merit pay is problematic, particularly in light of the number of hours of external service required to achieve a high score. It was noted that although smaller weights can be attached to service, if a faculty member wishes to receive merit pay, he or she must engage in 240 hours of service to achieve a score of 5. As with any new system, the Visiting Team suggests a thorough evaluation of its effectiveness. (CFR 3.3)

Given the important role adjunct faculty play in the academic life of the institution, performance evaluation of adjunct faculty is equally important to that of full-time faculty. Adjunct faculty are contracted on a course-by-course basis through the Deans and are evaluated by students with the same 39-item course evaluation as full-time faculty (“student opinion survey”). A one-item summary report is prepared for Deans as an initial screening tool of the student opinion survey. This initial item screening permits comparison across all sections of the course, discipline, school, and university. The initial screening item assists
Deans in determining if a full review of the student opinion survey is warranted. While other factors may be considered if problems are evident (e.g., student complaint or unusual grade distribution), other evidence of adjunct effectiveness is not required. Given the significant role that adjunct faculty play in maintaining the instructional quality of the institution, the way in which adjunct faculty are developed, evaluated, and retained may be worth re-consideration. (CFR 3.3)

While evaluation practices for full-time faculty are aligned with institutional purposes and seem to be improving, the increased workload of full-time faculty was a recurring concern. Full-time faculty have been asked (and have appropriately responded) to engage in a significant number of new initiatives and their associated tasks in order to improve the quality assurance processes at Brandman. As a result of the new processes, faculty work has increased, while faculty teaching loads have not been reduced, thus resulting in perceptions of insufficiency. The Visiting Team recommends that Brandman re-evaluate faculty workload in light of new academic processes and a new academic term length (8 weeks) to ensure that faculty are sufficiently resourced to fulfill their primary obligations. (CFR 3.3, 3.4, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7)

II. C. 2. Communication and Training Development

Brandman’s culture is highly collaborative with multiple modes of communication evident for formal and informal meetings and communication. Faculty and staff are used to using the campus synchronous communication system (Adobe Connect) as well as connecting with each other by numerous other means—from phones to Facebook. The collaborative
culture is also supported by shared information systems such as the MyWindow portal, which is the go-to-place for campus information and will soon be integrated with the Banner system.

Brandman has made a conscious effort not only to implement technology, but also to implement processes and set expectations for working effectively in distributed teams. For example, faculty mentoring other faculty is mostly done remotely; faculty use the Y-Community for providing feedback on courses; the Chancellor shares information university-wide in live webinars where some people meet in rooms at campuses and others watch on their computers; and many regular meetings are held with participants face-to-face and on Adobe Connect. In these ways, the challenges of a widely distributed system of faculty, students, and campuses have created a culture of strong social bonds and access to processes and information, which have helped Brandman navigate its rapid growth and transitions.

A key component of Brandman’s communication system is also the expectations of full-time and adjunct faculty to be at campus sites for regular meetings and for office hours. The time commitment of faculty for these important responsibilities needs to be examined in the context of each faculty’s workload. (CFR 3.3)

II. D. Other Issues Arising Under the Standards

Distance Learning

Brandman has robust capacity to deliver high-quality blended and online programs. These delivery formats are the exclusive way that courses are delivered and are therefore deeply imbedded into every aspect of the University’s systems, governance, academic oversight, and culture. As noted in other sections, all aspects of program and course design and evaluation integrate blended and online learning processes, instructional designs, best
practices and innovations. The new Center for Instructional Innovation (CII) provides highly trained faculty instructional designers, and a new three-week required course for faculty focuses exclusively on the success techniques and methods for achieving effective learning outcomes using blended and online delivery. (CFR 2.8, 3.4)

The institution’s student support services are robust including enrollment mentors, course counselors, program advisors, tech support, library support, and one-stop hotline. Brandman also has the capacity and the leadership to analyze the trends and learning outcomes for online and blended delivery from multiple perspectives to identify and improve on issues such as retention in online courses. (CFR 2.13)

The Team recommends two areas to work on for the EER: (1) fully implement responsibility and a process of review, revision, and time tracking if necessary that provides evidence that courses comply with the Brandman credit hour policy; (2) provide evidence of compliance with the federal requirement that student identity is assured (p. 221, WASC Resource Book for Spring 2012 Visits). (CFR 1.7)

*Academic Freedom*

On numerous occasions, faculty voiced affirmation of the senior administration’s commitment to maintain open channels of communication and commitment to faculty voice in the governance process, particularly as it relates to matters of curriculum. On some occasions, concerns were raised about the lack of security felt by faculty to freely voice concerns or offer critique. Lack of security was connected to relatively short contract lengths and a perceived lack of anonymity in surveys distributed for feedback. (CFR 1.4, 3.11)
Discussions with personnel from Institutional Research confirmed the challenges of anonymous data collection, but remedies were being considered at the time of the visit. As Brandman continues to recruit qualified and committed faculty, it may be worth investigating means of ensuring academic freedom, one of which may be extended contract lengths. (CFR 1.4, 3.2, 3.3)

*Student Life and Student/Alumni Affairs*

Issues of student life and student affairs at Brandman University are different from those faced at traditional colleges and universities. Brandman’s focus on the adult learner brings a student body that is fully engaged in their community through work and family life. The University has developed very little in the area of student life and co-curricular activities. When discussing this matter with campus leadership, faculty, and staff, there was unanimous agreement that traditional student life was not something their students would seek. (CFR 2.11, 2.13)

Brandman’s mission is to focus on the “adult learner.” Although it is clear that the Brandman student leads a very full life, the Visiting Team sensed that some attention to student life outside of the classroom might become an important issue. Brandman students are not interested in traditional or residential student life activities; however, students are interested in professional development activities, student organizations that promote their career development, and the development of stronger learning communities among students. As a matter of fact, the Team noted that a student activity was being organized at the Irvine campus during the Team’s visit. Even online students wanted better ways to develop
connections with other students for both career development and learning development. The Team suggests that the University assess this area. (CFR 1.5, 2.11, 2.13, 4.6)

Furthermore, the Team noted the absence of a physical or virtual career center and recommends an assessment of need in this area. (CFR 2.13)

The Team also had an opportunity to speak to a few alumni. Despite the small sample size, the Team detected the need for the University to help alumni understand the transition from the Chapman brand to Brandman. There also may be a desire to connect its alumni to Brandman University. The Team suggests that the University do some assessment in this area in that it may lead to greater support for the institution. (CFR 1.1, 1.2)

Reflection and Stabilization

Over the past two years, Brandman University has designed and implemented new programs and processes in every aspect of the institution. The Team is confident that many of the Brandman staff and faculty came because of the innovative spirit at the institution. But at the same time, the Team detected the beginning of “innovation fatigue.”

A number of changes and new developments have occurred during the past several years and will continue over the next 18 months. While enthusiasm is high, the capacity to innovate and create may benefit from some stability in key areas. The Team recognizes that Brandman will continue to grow and change, but some consolidation and/or stabilization would be of great advantage to the University for the next short period. The Team believes that the University would benefit from a period of reflection and stabilization.
SECTION III
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are several key findings that are the underpinnings of the Visiting Team’s commendations and recommendations.

Key Findings

The Visiting Team found Brandman University to be:

- A thriving new university with strong historical roots in academic excellence,
- A university that is totally student centered,
- A university firmly rooted in a “culture of evidence” where members of the community value rubrics, measurable goals, and solid information on which to chart its future,
- A university searching for best practices from any source and applying those practices to its work,
- A university willing to seek the best services and practices externally that would support the infrastructure of the university,
- A university that collaborates across all boundaries, with high morale and enthusiasm for all that it does, and
- A university where quality assurance in all areas, particularly in academic affairs, is deeply part of its DNA.

In light of these extremely positive findings, the Visiting Team cites the following commendations.
Commendations

The Team commends Brandman University:

1) For its creation of the triangulated faculty evaluation process —i.e., for its use of the Faculty Personnel Committee (FPC), associate deans and deans to make assessments about faculty performance; for the way it aligns the strategic plan, faculty workload proposal, faculty performance evaluation; and faculty professional development using a process that is shared, transparent and encourages inter-rater reliability. The Visiting Team looks forward to seeing how the process is implemented and the institution’s assessment of its effectiveness. (CFR 3.3, 3.4)

2) For regularly engaging in the practice of identifying and integrating best practices and models into their academic processes, such as use of the Quality Matters rubric for course review, Bloom’s digital taxonomy for course writing competency statements, and LEAP and DQP for General Education Assessment. (CFR 2.2, 4.4)

3) For the integration of the five Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO) into all programs at the upper division, using standardized ILO rubrics across all programs. (CFR 2.2, 4.4)

4) For creating well-organized systems of curriculum design and curriculum improvement, all of which emphasize assurance of student learning as part of the process. In particular, capacity for quality assurance for blended and online courses— their processes use standardized procedures, national best practices and are informed by assessment data. This includes a quality check of course design; clear expectations
and monitoring for faculty and student performance in courses; and assessment of course outcomes.

5) For its student support through one-stop call center support, course-level counselors and program-level advisors. It is commendable that Brandman has made great efforts to ensure students understand program requirements and receive timely advisement at multiple levels and to help them complete their programs in a timely fashion. (CFR 2.12, 2.13, 2.14)

**Recommendations**

Although the Team found no areas of concerns, it would like to make the following recommendations:

1) The Team recommends that the University leadership and faculty collaborate to evaluate workload for full-time faculty and associate deans, given the rapid changes in academic programs, classes, academic technology, and course delivery. (CFR 3.2, 3.3)

2) Brandman University relies on a highly engaged adjunct/part-time faculty. The Team recommends that the institution look for ways of valuing and honoring the work of adjuncts. The institution should also involve them in the discussion on the role of the professoriate. (CFR 3.2, 3.3)

3) Although it is clear that the Brandman student leads a very full life, the Team senses that some attention to student life outside of the classroom may become an important issue. Brandman students are not interested in traditional or residential student life activities; however, students are interested in professional development activities, student organizations that promote their career development, and the development of
stronger learning communities among students. The Team recommends an assessment of need in this area. The Team also noted the absence of a physical or virtual career center and recommends an assessment of need in this area. (CFR 1.5, 2.11, 2.13, 4.6)

4) While speaking with alumni representatives, the Team detected the need for Brandman University to help its alumni understand the transition from the Chapman brand to Brandman. The Team suggests that the institution do some assessment in this area in that it may lead to greater support for the institution. (CFR 1.1, 1.2)

5) The Team believes that the institution would benefit from a period of reflection and stabilization. A number of changes and new developments have occurred during the past several years. The Team recognizes that the institution will continue to grow and change but some consolidation and/or stabilization would be of great advantage to the institution for the next short period. While enthusiasm is high, the capacity to innovative and create may benefit from some stability in key areas. (CFR 4.1)
SECTION IV

PREPARATIONS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

Brandman University has begun work for the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) prior to completion of the CPR. Its EER work proceeding is in alignment with the Institutional Proposal. The institution has exceptionally well-functioning institutional research capacity consistent with its purposes and objectives. (CFR 4.5) Much data has already been collected. The Visiting Team is confident that the institution has the capacity and infrastructure to complete the EER and will be able to produce evidence of its effectiveness at the time of the EER, including findings and results of assessment of student and organizational learning. The Team looks forward to the EER in 18 months and expects to see how the institution deploys the evidence it collects and how it influences the institutional development.

Brandman will be offering new programs starting in August 2012—(1) EdD in Organizational Leadership, and (2) a new joint venture program with Ameritas College for Spanish-speaking college students. Although they are new, these programs should be included in the EER scheduled for Fall 2013. The Visiting Team thus suggests that Brandman University pay particular attention to these new programs as well as to the established programs as it prepares for its 2013 EER.

The Team also recommends two areas to work on for the EER: (1) fully implement responsibility and a process of review, revision and time tracking if necessary that provides evidence that courses comply with the Brandman credit hour policy; (2) provide evidence of
compliance with the federal requirement that student identity is assured (p. 221 of the WASC Resource Book for Spring 2012 Visits). (CFR 1.7)


**Appendix A**

**CREDIT HOUR REVIEW**

<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>Reviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy on Credit hour</td>
<td>Does this policy adhere to WASC policy and federal regulations? Yes Comments: Clearly consistent with WASC policy and federal regulations.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process(es)/periodic review</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)? In the works. Policy adopted 1/26/2012 Does the institution adhere to this procedure? In early stages of implementation. Comments: Recommend that a procedure for review be integrated into the program and course development and revision process.</td>
<td>Yes</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? Yes Comments:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses</td>
<td>What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? Hybrid How many syllabi were reviewed? 1 What degree level(s)? Undergraduate What discipline(s)? Psychology Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? Yes Comments:</td>
<td>Yes</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>What kinds of courses? How many syllabi were reviewed? 2 What degree level(s)? Masters What discipline(s)? Psychology, Nursing Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? Yes Comments:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>