

**REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT FOR REAFFIRMATION OF
ACCREDITATION**

to

Pacific School of Religion
Berkeley, CA

10/2/2017 to 10/5/2017

for

The Board of Commissioners of
The Commission on Accrediting of the
Association of Theological Schools

EVALUATION COMMITTEE

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I. INTRODUCTION

Brief description of Pacific School of Religion

Pacific School of Religion (PSR) is a freestanding seminary with formal relationships with the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and has informal relationships with other traditions and social organizations. Most of the students in the degree programs are enrolled in the MDiv program. The school's mission is articulated in the phrase: "preparing theologically and spiritually rooted leaders for social transformation." The school claims to be one of the most diverse communities in theological education. Evidence of this can be seen by the diversity of the student body in terms of racial/ethnic background (Caucasian numbers are less than half) and gender identity (40% identify as gender queer). Differences in socio-economic class can also be seen among the students. What is also commendable in this diversity is the shared practice of open and honest exchange. Faculty are also diverse with a significant (for mainline theological education) percentage of persons of color as well as national origin. Looking at the pictures of the administrative executive team, one sees the faces of the global church. PSR has a history of being innovative. That culture of innovation was apparent during the visit in the conversations and energy displayed by administrators, faculty, and staff.

PSR is located in Berkeley, California, near the University of Berkeley and is a member of the Graduate Theological Union (GTU). Faculty participate in the GTU doctoral and MA programs. Students may cross-register in any of the classes offered by GTU schools. The GTU library serves the students and faculty. PSR has two centers: the Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies (CLGS) and the Ignite Institute. The mission of CLGS is "to advance the well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and transgender people and to transform faith communities and the wider society by taking a leading role in shaping a new public discourse on religion, gender identity and sexuality through education, research, community building and advocacy" (website). Ignite sees itself as a leadership and innovation lab which intends to develop "visionary, socially-responsible leaders in both nonprofit and for-profit spaces, as well as creating innovative business models for social change" (website).

Accreditation History

Two reports were required at the time of the 2009 reaffirmation of the school's accreditation. One required report was on the fiscal condition of the school, including a current audited financial statement and a three-year financial plan. The financial report was received by the Board of Commissioners in February 2011 and a report regarding efforts to stabilize the school's financial condition was required by November 2011. In February 2012, the Board accepted the required report and required a report by January 2014 regarding the school's success at stabilizing its financial condition and projections for eliminating the unrestricted fund deficit and endowment interfund borrowing. In May 2014, a reader panel of the Board voted to receive the report and required a report by January 2015 regarding continued progress toward financial equilibrium. In May 2015, a reader panel of the Board voted to receive the report and to require that as part of its institutional self-study in 2017, the school provide evidence that demonstrates how the school meets the expectations of Standard 8, section 8.2.

The other required report was on the progress on the development and implementation of a comprehensive program review process and the cycles of review by November 2010. In February 2011, the Board voted to require a report by September 1, 2012, regarding comprehensive and systematic assessment of student learning outcomes for all degree programs. In January 2013, a reader panel voted to accept the required report and commend the school for its progress.

During the period of accreditation, the Board approved a comprehensive distance education program, granted approval for the Master of Arts (Social Transformation) degree program (academic MA), and granted approval for the complete DMin to be offered at an extension site in Honolulu, HI.

Adequacy of the self-study

The self-study was a collaborative process involving the PSR community. The school's accreditation committee met monthly during the 2014-2015 academic year. The chair of the accreditation committee changed hands when the former chair retired. Both the former chair and the current chair were available to the evaluation committee during the visit. At the time of the visit, many of the key administrative staff were new to the institution. The chief business officer came in 2014. The president began in 2015. The vice president for academic affairs and dean began two months before the evaluation committee visit. Documents were readily available to the evaluation committee. During the visit, some of the logistics for the evaluation committee were a bit wanting, probably due to the newness of some of the support staff.

II. GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS

1. Purpose, Planning and Evaluation

Some of the key administrative positions were in flux during the past few years. This has meant that though the statement of institutional purpose is clear, how that plays out has not been as clear. With the key administrators now in position there is energy to move forward with a "transformative" vision of the future. During an interview with the president of PSR, a draft of "Our Transformative Future: 2017-2018 Institutional Priorities" was shared with the evaluation committee. The document was to be presented at the school's next board meeting. The president talked about the conversations of innovation needed in the three valleys located near the PSR campus: Silicon Valley, Central Valley, and Bay Area/East Bay Valley. He also talked about the people in those valleys: those of other faiths, the young people, and the immigrants and how conversations with them could be fostered. The president mentioned the need to move beyond representational diversity with social innovation and entrepreneurial leadership. These are the creative visions he presented to the evaluation committee which the "Our Transformative Future" document outlined. Because the board had not yet acted on the document, the evaluation committee cannot fully consider it in this report, but affirms the work of planning that the school is undertaking.

At the time of the evaluation visit, the school's mission statement was stated as "to prepare theologically and spiritually rooted leaders for social change." The committee noted that some of the newer documents use "social transformation" rather than "social change." The choice of words may seem minor but the fact that there is a difference in the meaning of the two phrases point to an evolving understanding of the school's mission. A clear articulation of the mission may help to ensure that programs support the mission of the school and its strategic direction.

The school understands that their resources are limited and that there is a need to be wise in resourcing both degree and certificate programs. The school has three masters-level degree programs, a doctor of ministry program, seven certificate programs (five credit programs and two non-credit programs), as well as involvement with the GTU MA and PhD programs. Good assessment will help in deciding whether all are core to their mission.

After the last evaluation visit in 2009, ATS recommended that PSR work on assessment and evaluation. The school has done so and has come a long way. The school's accreditation committee is now the assessment committee. The change in the name shows that much of the accreditation committee's focus was on assessment and is committed to continuing the school's culture of assessment.

PSR has been working on a strategic plan for a couple of years and has involved various stakeholders. The timing of the evaluation committee's visit and the approval of the plan did not allow the evaluation committee to be able to evaluate the plan and its progress. The report due date recommended by the committee allows for this. This also gives the institution time to align its assessment with the new mission statement, plan, and vision.

The committee recommends for needed improvement:

7.c. To require a report by April 1, 2019 regarding institutional purpose, planning, and evaluation (Standard 1). This report should demonstrate that the school is able to articulate a clear mission and intentional guiding vision that permeates all stakeholders of the institution and that serves as the framework for comprehensive institutional planning and evaluation (Standard 1, preface and section 1.1). Particular attention should be given to the ways in which this mission and vision inform and support institutional decision-making (with particular attention to programs offered, allocation of resources, and constituencies served) as well as ongoing evaluation procedures for institutional vitality (Standard 1, section 1.2).

2. Institutional Integrity

It is clear that PSR's mission and values are congruent with its policies and practices and that the school complies with state and federal authorities, laws, and regulations in its policies and operations. Admission is open to individuals of any denomination or no denomination, and students from different denominational backgrounds are enrolled currently, though the school has formal relationships with three denominations—the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). As stated in the Targeted Issues Checklist (section 2.2), the school has obtained state licensure to offer online courses in each of the states in the U.S. except Alabama. Before and during the visit by the accreditation team, PSR complied with all requests for information and documentation and followed guidelines regarding preparation of the institutional report.

All of PSR's published materials abide by these laws and accurately represent the state of the institution. Necessary information such as tuition, fees, and refund and transfer policies are properly disclosed in print and online. All relevant materials provide gender-inclusive language, including PSR's mission to prepare "theologically and spiritually rooted leaders for social transformation." In the past year, recruitment, admissions, enrollment and financial aid staff also updated the school's materials and brochures to portray the institution and its students more accurately in terms of diversity and a focus on social justice.

In this regard, a key strength of PSR is the commitment to, and embodiment of, diversity that permeates the institution, as demonstrated by the senior leadership, faculty, students, and other stakeholders (Standard 2, sections 2.2.5 and 2.2.6). This diversity not only extends to race and ethnicity but also global representation, gender, gender identity, sexual identity, and socio-economic status in ways that are rarely seen in graduate theological education. In the midst of this inter-cultural environment is the shared practice of open and honest exchange among all constituencies, with the overall goal being spiritual and social transformation. It is commendable that over half of all enrolled students in Fall 2016 were non-white, half or more than half of all students and faculty are women, and nearly 40% of students self-identify as gender queer. In addition, the historical institutional commitments of the school to diversity and social justice have continued with several programs and initiatives including the Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies, Ignite Institute, Changemaker Fellowship, Emerging Leaders Program, and Project Access partnership. Through course content, including a specific course on race and privilege and various immersion and contextual educational experiences, PSR students are gaining knowledge, appreciation, and openness for practicing ministry effectively in culturally and racially diverse settings.

Care for students is an embodied value for all faculty, administration, and staff. Each member of PSR provides personalized attention to student needs and concerns; and equitable policies are in place

regarding student tuition refunds, transfer credits and student grievance concerns. In particular, the grievance policy for staff, students, and faculty was updated recently and provides greater accessibility and ease of use by all constituencies. As far as the committee could observe, the school employs nondiscriminatory policies in employment, as embodied in the equitable representation of women, LGBTQ+ individuals, persons of color, and international faculty and staff. With regard to U.S. federal financial aid assistance for PSR students, the school has had a very low cohort default rate, with the most recent year's rate at 0. One minor issue was reported in the 2016 audit (Circular A-133) for federal financial aid regarding a missed notification deadline, but a Corrective Action Plan was swiftly implemented (Standard 2, section 2.2.7). PSR complies with all federal Title IV regulations, and financial aid staff stays abreast of regulatory changes as they arise.

While PSR has published some policies for appropriate and ethical use of technology, digital media, and Internet for staff (Computing Resources Acceptable Use Policy and Email Account Policy) and students (Use of Technology in the Classroom Policy and the Student Center's Computer Lab Basic Guidelines), no such policy exists for faculty. In addition, the policies for students do not extend beyond the classroom or the student center. Because of the increased reliance on online technologies for course delivery and content as well as for administrative and personal functions (often conducted in public spaces), the committee encourages creating additional and/or more comprehensive technology use policies for all constituencies, publishing these policies in all handbooks and catalogs, and ensuring proper enforcement of policies, to the best of the school's abilities (Standard 2, section 2.2.10).

3. Theological Curriculum: Learning, Teaching and Research

As described in greater detail under each Degree Program Standard, the curriculum of Pacific School of Religion is designed to embody the school's mission of developing theologically and spiritually rooted leaders for social transformation both within and beyond the church. The school offers four degree programs: Master of Divinity (MDiv), Master of Arts in Social Transformation (MAST), Master of Theological Studies (MTS), and Doctor of Ministry (DMin). As mentioned below, the evaluation committee noted that the self-study report described the MAST degree as a professional (Standard B) degree, but the degree was approved by the Commission as an academic (Standard D) degree. The evaluation committee is recommending a report to clarify this (see the Educational Standard).

Overall, the curriculum of PSR as described in the self-study report is indeed commendable in its effort to be relevant to the world and in alignment with the institution's mission and vision of social justice and social transformation. In addition to degree learning outcomes, the school has articulated overall institutional learning outcomes (self-study, p.22) which clearly identify how PSR's commitments are to be enacted throughout the learning process. The evaluation committee observed numerous examples of the integration of theoretical and practical concerns, and was impressed with the ways in which the school's mission is carried out throughout all degree programs and in the syllabi that were reviewed. Of particular note, the MAST degree, launched in 2015, seems like a particularly clear embodiment of the school's mission. The evaluation committee was pleased to hear from administrators, faculty and students about ways through which MAST has brought in new energy, insights and horizons to propel PSR into the 21st century and beyond.

The school is also making great strides to ensure that its curriculum is accessible to a wide range of students. Some of this is seen through the school's certificate offerings which allow students to explore PSR without committing to a full degree program and has the potential to serve as a feeder into the school's masters degrees. The school shared with the evaluation committee that it is currently exploring stackable credentials (by way of an ATS Educational Models and Practices grant). The evaluation committee affirms the school's efforts to be innovative in ways that well-serve its constituencies (noting, for example, that ongoing processes of vocational discernment might lead a student to begin with a

certificate, continue to a two-year degree, and then stay on for a three-year degree – or, that a student planning on a three-year degree might choose to exit sooner, and could be well served with another degree or certificate in hand). At the same time, the evaluation committee strongly urges the school to attend carefully to the integrity of each degree program, not as an accumulation of classes and credits, but rather with each one having clear learning outcomes and a distinctive purpose (Standard 3, section 3.1.2).

The school's self-study clearly describes its commitments and efforts in the areas of learning, teaching, and research. Of particular note here are the school's value of interdisciplinarity in teaching, its investments in "high impact local immersions" (self-study, p.25), and its attention to the integration of classroom and co-curricular learning. Teaching is evaluated by students, peers, and administrators. The faculty (further described under Standard 5) are actively involved in research, publishing, and professional service. In all of these efforts, the school's emphasis on interdisciplinary and contextual scholarship is readily apparent. As noted in the committee recommendations, the evaluation committee strongly affirms the institutional commitment to and embodiment of diversity that permeates the institution as well as the school's culture of innovation, both of which are readily apparent throughout the curriculum.

4. Library and Information Resources

The Graduate Theological Union (GTU) library serves the students and faculty of PSR as well as the seven other member schools of the GTU. The library was formed through the consolidation of the member school libraries and is overseen by the GTU. An advantage of a library serving schools with diverse backgrounds and constituencies is the breadth of the collection. PSR students and faculty have access to one of the best theological libraries which they would not have without this joint venture.

The library has an appropriate collection development policy which is reviewed annually by the Faculty Library Committee. The collection includes material important to theological study and practice of ministry and includes media and electronic resources. The library provides a great breadth of resources for the teaching and research needs of all the programs of all the member schools. The University of California-Berkeley and the GTU signed a cooperative collection agreement which allows coordinated collection development and reciprocal borrowing. The library is also a member of the American Theological Library Association Reciprocal Borrowing Program. This program allows students to borrow resources from other members of this program. Membership in the Statewide California Library Resources Consortium (SCELC) allows the library to receive discounts on a number of electronic databases.

It seems from the library section of the self-study report that there is an emphasis on doctoral studies. There is a doctoral student on the Faculty Library Committee (p. 40) but not a non-doctoral student. A comment in the self-study report mentioned that there is "a reasonable collection development budget to support doctoral work" (p. 41). PSR participates in the GTU doctoral program but most of PSR's students are either in masters-level programs or are in certificate programs. While there is a sense that doctoral studies resources would also benefit the other programs, consideration may need to be given about how to ensure that resources support all the programs at PSR. The evaluation committee suggests that the library follow up on their self-study recommendation to "conduct a more thorough assessment of library acquisitions to reflect the curriculum and programmatic commitments of the member schools."

Library staff provide reference and teaching services for students with weekend hours for commuter and non-resident students. Through their website the library provides guides, live video and chat reference service, and tutorials. Residential students attend the library orientation.

The library director stays informed of decisions of the Academic Committee of the GTU. The Faculty Library Committee acts as liaisons to the various member schools. Because the library serves a number of

institutions, the library director does not participate directly in long-range curriculum planning at each of the institutions. The library director is a member of the executive team of the GTU and possesses a MLIS and an MA in historical and systematic theology. The library director is newly appointed though he was the interim director and had earlier been a part of the library staff. The library is working on a strategic plan. The last one concluded in 2012. Professional and support staff have attended conferences for development.

The library staff has decreased over the last decade but is still perceived to be adequate. A new organizational structure was created which helped in this change. Operating efficiencies have helped to keep costs low. The acquisitions budget remains flat.

5. *Faculty*

As described in the self-study, Pacific School of Religion has 12 core faculty members and 3 visiting faculty, and also utilizes a number of adjunct faculty (15 in the 2016-2017 academic year). The faculty appear to be appropriately qualified, and serve well as disciplinary specialists who are also held together by threads of common interest consistent with the school's mission (such as interests in feminist and womanist studies, liberation and post-colonial studies, and queer theory). Of the 15 core and visiting faculty members, 6 are persons of color, 7 were born outside the United States, and only one of the 12 core faculty members received her terminal degree at the Graduate Theological Union. Without question, the institutional commitment to and embodiment of diversity is a strength to be affirmed. Faculty are evaluated by students at the end of each semester, have annual conversations with the dean and president each year, and participate in a peer review process where faculty visit each other's classrooms and evaluate pedagogical strategies and classroom effectiveness.

PSR faculty members are guided by a faculty manual which outlines policies and procedures for hiring, promotion reviews, and the granting of tenure. Of particular note here is that the school (via its faculty development committee and the academic committee of its board) has been reviewing the tenure structure, and at present some faculty are on contract whereas some are on tenure lines. The evaluation committee suggests that the school continue to pay close attention to this issue and that it continue to develop, implement, and clearly articulate mechanisms for recruiting, nurturing, and retaining qualified faculty in light of changing practices (Standard 5, section 5.1.5).

It appears to the evaluation committee that faculty have appropriate support for their work, including professional development, opportunities for research and scholarship, a sabbatical policy for contract and tenure/tenure-track faculty, and a reasonable teaching load (four courses per year). Not only is freedom of inquiry affirmed, but the self-study reported an openness and an encouragement for faculty to "travel the untraveled and more experimental paths toward the creation of new knowledge" (self-study, p. 45), which the evaluation committee also observed in the topics and methods displayed in faculty publications. Evaluation committee members noted some concerns with faculty morale, which is perhaps unsurprising given the numerous transitions and financial stresses of the institution in recent years. The evaluation committee suggests that the school give ongoing attention to practices of shared governance, particularly as this relates to issues of institutional environment and communication between stakeholders (faculty, administration, and trustees).

It was clear to the evaluation committee that faculty are engaged actively and thoughtfully in practices of teaching and learning, and that the school has made progress in creating a "culture of assessment" throughout the institution. It was also apparent to the committee that the faculty care deeply for its students and for the mission of the school, and that they expressed great support for each other as peers walking along together in their work of educating students.

6. Student Recruitment, Admission, Services, and Placement

Pacific School of Religion has demonstrated itself to be an institution that is highly responsive to students' needs and general flourishing, namely by seeking to equip individuals for leadership and social transformation in today's contexts. The level of commitment by faculty and staff to the institution as a whole was evident throughout the committee's visit. Student recruitment policies are consistent with the purpose of PSR, and the seminary is accurately represented in all print and online materials. Recently, PSR also updated its recruitment and program materials in order to emphasize the school's values and practices around social justice and transformation.

Because of the decision to eliminate some shared services provided by the GTU—particularly in the areas of student information and financial aid administration—this presented, and continues to present, both challenges and opportunities for PSR and its staff. In addition, staffing shifts in the last few years have not created a high level of continuity for the area of student services at PSR. Despite these contextual shifts, staff have remained committed, diligent, and focused on not only maintaining the high level of service to students, but also on using new systems and developing more efficient processes in order to be even more responsive to student needs. One example of this is the school's move to a more user-friendly, accessible data management system for student information and enrollment management. Another example is the development and execution of a more strategic admissions and marketing strategy for the school that incorporates social media and online technologies, the purpose of which is to ensure a continuing level of qualified applicants and admits.

Admissions criteria is appropriate to each degree program, with all students providing a personal statement, three letters of reference, a resume or curriculum vitae, and appropriate test scores. The staff is hopeful that admissions percentages will increase in future years by encouraging individuals to complete unfinished applications and by recruiting through the school's newer certificate and community-based initiatives. PSR has excelled in recruiting and admitting a very diverse student population by race, ethnicity, nationality, gender identity, and sexual orientation; therefore, recruitment efforts have been quite successful in this regard and should continue.

Great care for the academic and spiritual wellbeing of students is paramount at PSR, and several students expressed that the faculty and staff were very attentive to their overall needs. Accommodations for students with disabilities are evident; and efforts are being made to provide services to students in the areas of mental health and writing skills in particular. In addition, the housing offered to students greatly reduces the cost of living for individuals who would not otherwise be able to live in the Berkeley area. Though these services provide much support to individuals who reside on campus, commute regularly, and tend to be full-time enrollees, the committee encourages the school to develop programs and/or strategies to increase its support to distance education and part-time students, perhaps through the use of online technology (Standard 6, section 6.3.3). As a part of these services, the committee also encourages the development of additional strategies to increase mental health support, perhaps in cooperation with nearby schools. It was encouraging for the committee to learn that several Facebook groups have been developed for support; but additional strategies would strengthen overall student support and access.

Student rights and responsibilities are articulated clearly in all appropriate handbooks, catalogs and online, as are all degree requirements, courses, fees, grading and academic policies. There is a process for hearing and addressing student grievances (as well as processes for addressing grievances of faculty and staff), and all records of these complaints are maintained appropriately by PSR and were reviewed by the committee during the visit. Program requirements for all degree programs are reviewed regularly by faculty; and in addition, the Academic Affairs staff recently reviewed policies and procedures in light of FERPA guidelines in order to ensure student rights and privacy.

Financial aid processing was moved in-house to PSR in the 2016-2017 academic year; and while this was a challenging shift that placed additional work on staff, it has created greater flexibility and access for students. Commendably, almost 90% of incoming masters and certificate students received scholarship aid the previous year, though the amount of financial aid that was awarded decreased overall. All federal loan borrowers complete the required counseling, and all students are encouraged to make one-on-one appointments to discuss options for financing their educations. Even with these strategies, debt remains high for PSR graduates. The committee encourages the school's administration and board to move forward in developing and implementing a robust strategic plan to help students reduce borrowing for theological education (Standard 6, section 6.4.1).

Because of the multi-denominational context of PSR, much of the placement of graduates has been managed through the formal relationships that PSR has with its three primary denominational partners. It was less clear to the committee how placement is addressed for students who are not pursuing ordination or who are from other traditions, and the committee observes that school has experienced some inconsistencies in the past regarding tracking of its graduates. Data regarding placement has begun to be captured with greater depth through the hiring of a staff person in the office of institutional advancement to work with alumni. Some efforts to provide access to available ministry or other leadership opportunities are in place online and via internal email, but the school should continue its efforts to build upon existing placement services as appropriate to an increasingly part-time and multi-denominational student population (Standard 6, section 6.5.1), particularly for members of groups that have been disadvantaged in employment because of their race, ethnicity, gender, and/or disability (Standard 6, section 6.5.3).

7. Authority and Governance

PSR is self-described as a progressive Christian seminary, both ecumenical and interfaith. The school has a long history of advocating for the rights of others, embracing diversity in all forms, encouraging inclusivity and helping those who are disadvantaged.

Pacific School of Religion is duly chartered to operate in the State of California as a non-profit educational corporation and appears to comply with those requirements. PSR was accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in 1938 and by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges in 1971 (WASC, now WSCUC), both most recently reviewed in 2009. The articles of incorporation and bylaws identify PSR as a free-standing institution existing under a self-perpetuating board of trustees. The current board numbers between 15 and 21 members representing a broad range of backgrounds and expertise, men and women who mirror the racially, ethnically, and denominationally diverse population of PSR. Board participation and engagement is strong and a clear structure exists to carry out responsibilities effectively and collegially with the administration.

PSR has carefully articulated roles, responsibilities and structures in place to ensure the well-being of the institution and process of governance. The board is committed to a collegial form of governance that includes the administration, faculty, students and strategic partners. The board evaluates the work of the president annually and meets three times per year, or more often as needed. A board leadership team meets every two weeks to ensure regular communication between the board and administration is in place to identify any issues. The trustees take their fiduciary and financial responsibilities seriously and exercise authority appropriately. A financial dashboard and five-year plan have been developed and are reviewed at each meeting, updated to reflect current data as it becomes available. Roles were clarified in 2014 by a shared governance committee during the transition when the school was seeking a new president. The committee developed an understanding of shared governance as it relates to consultation, rules of engagement, and as a system of aligning priorities. With the new president in place, the focus of the board intentionally shifted from operational oversight to a more appropriate leadership role of fiduciary and policy oversight, strategic planning and resource development. A strategic planning document, "Our

Transformative Future,” has recently been developed that will guide the next phase of work at PSR, aligned with the four strategic values identified: student success, sustainable financial health, strength through diversity, and excellence in leadership. The evaluation committee observed the board of PSR as an engaged, collegial group, excited and passionate about the work and mission of the seminary. Participation in the ATS Governance Project led to a much-improved board orientation process with well-defined expectations, a comprehensive method of evaluating effectiveness and representation on various committees. A goal is now in place for the board membership and effectiveness committee to conduct a self-assessment annually and report the findings to the full board. The board has a clearly stated and executed policy on conflict of interest that is agreed to in writing.

The administrative staff meets a minimum of twice per month in addition to individual meetings with the president. A majority of the staff are all relatively new, having come to PSR in the last several years, and have current job descriptions that clearly outline their responsibilities and method for assessment. A detailed manual addressing personnel policies and procedural processes is available to all staff. The committee observed that the staff are committed to the mission of the school and diversity in all its forms. The staff seem to work well together, are supportive of each other and of the faculty, and dedicated to the success of the students. Faculty meet regularly, at least monthly, and are invited to attend all sessions of the board meetings. The faculty has one representative to the board that has voice to contribute to institutional decision-making, but not vote. The faculty have a development committee that works closely with the dean to advise on academic related issues or policies to be presented to the faculty as a group. Decisions made by the faculty are guided by the mission of the school developed by the board. Faculty are evaluated annually with the mission taken into consideration. The role of the faculty is well defined in how academic programs are developed or amended; other responsibilities are clearly articulated in the faculty manual. Students are represented on the board, including all board committees, and at monthly faculty and staff meetings; clear responsibilities are outlined in their community association documents.

8. Institutional Resources

The emphasis on social justice and transformation in the programs and curriculum is noticed also in the way the institution relates to the various constituencies and permeates the community. Though many of the key administrators and some of the support staff are new or have new responsibilities, the evaluation committee noticed a deep support and enthusiasm for the institution. Even though financial resources are limited, the administration and board has sought to find ways to enhance the quality of the PSR community. The evaluation committee noticed the quality and commitment of faculty and staff, and the overall engagement and passion that all members of the community express toward the school and hopes this strength continues. Appropriate policies are in place regarding procedural fairness, sexual harassment, and discrimination.

The long term financial sustainability of PSR continues to be a significant challenge given its dependence on its endowment and real estate sale potential. On June 30, 2016, \$8.193 million had been borrowed from the endowment for operating purposes. The school had only \$7,873,673 in unrestricted endowment assets, and had borrowed all available unrestricted funds designated by the board. They borrowed from temporarily restricted funds which are donor restricted. This puts the school in a fragile situation where an unexpected national/global financial crisis could create a situation that the school could not recover from given its substantial reliance on its endowment for general operations. Keenly aware of this liability, PSR has begun to take action to address its endowment borrowing. At the end of the FY2016-17, the total balance borrowed had been reduced to \$6.7 million—an improvement of close to 1.5 million from the previous year. At its May 2017 meeting, the PSR board voted to end the practice of borrowing from PSR’s endowment to fund operations. It also authorized the use of unrestricted funds from the sale of the apartment building in June 2017 to offset revenue shortfalls, and affirmed its promise to repay the endowment, as demonstrated by repaying to the endowment in FY2017 \$800k from an unrestricted cash gift. The school indicates that the remainder of the balance owed to the endowment will be paid as other

residential properties are sold in FY2019. In addition, the school's 5-year forecast reflects the board's commitment to reducing the endowment draw rate by .1% each year until stabilizing at 4.5% in FY2023. Finally, to maximize returns in the near term, PSR is reconsidering its investment strategy to focus on investment efficiency and median benchmark returns. The board will change its investment manager this fiscal year in the hopes of realizing lower investment fees and superior returns.

PSR estimates that their property has a market value of approximately \$30 million. While the school had been working toward a sale of the entire campus, this plan fell through (leading to a postponement of this accreditation visit, which was originally scheduled for spring 2017). At this point, the school is working on a plan to sell parts of the property (outparcel and/or housing units), which they anticipate will cover all of the endowment borrowing and provide additional resources to strengthen the endowment. The sale in June 2017 of one of their apartment buildings for 3.2 million dollars confirmed the significant value of the school's property. The school is also developing plans to generate additional revenue from some of its housing units and to lease its Mudd building. At the time of the evaluation visit, the school clearly demonstrated an awareness of its financial condition and of the need to make significant adjustments to its financial models (one-time revenue, ongoing revenue, and expenses); however, most of these endeavors were still at the planning stage, although the school hoped to be able to concretize some of these plans in the very near future.

Other institutional transitions have also had an impact on the school's progress toward economic equilibrium, in both positive and challenging ways. Some personnel transitions have enabled the school to bring in more significantly experienced and qualified individuals, but the loss of aspects of institutional memory is also apparent at moments. Since the accounting is outsourced, it was reported that it is sometimes difficult to get the necessary information and reports when needed. Similarly, while new financial aid processes are in place, it was reported that the school has difficulty projecting its tuition income and discount accurately, and students noted that they were sometimes unclear about how much financial aid was being applied and how much tuition was owed. Development staff are now in place, and there are solid processes for solicitation, research, and stewardship. However, it was reported that a lot of catch up work needs to be done in cultivating large donors, as well as with board education. The evaluation committee is concerned that projections for large increases in fundraising may be too aggressive at this point. The evaluation committee encourages the school to be realistic in its fundraising goals, recognizing that development efforts often take time (Standard 8, section 8.2.4).

Another significant revenue stream for the school has been enrollment, which has been declining for several years. In FY14 the FTE reported to ATS was 149, compared to fall 2017 when the FTE is reported as 77. While the school indicates that 2014 was a "high water mark" in enrollment (in part due to a tuition-free fellowship that fall), even the larger trends of five years of data on the ATS institutional fact sheet demonstrate that declining enrollment is a significant area of concern for the school (with FTE from 2012 to 2016 reported as 134, 128, 149, 118, and 107, and headcount as 181, 187, 180, 159, and 139). As part of the school's institutional planning, it is noted that the Ignite Institute programs and the stackable degree program proposal are intended to bring in more students. The evaluation committee observes that plans based on increasing enrollment will need to be realistic and not overly optimistic, and should be based on data insofar as possible. A solid recruitment plan including realistic goals will be important in reversing the trend of declining enrollments.

Overall, at the time of the visit, the evaluation committee saw significant evidence of the school's attentiveness to financial issues, an emerging culture of planning and evaluation to address these issues, and some examples of concrete steps that have been taken in support of financial equilibrium. At the same time, however, the committee observed many elements that were still (perhaps necessarily) only at the level of discussion or in initial stages of implementation, and thus the school was not yet able to demonstrate appropriate financial stability. While affirming the school's recent efforts, the evaluation

committee also recommends that the Board of Commissioners monitor the school's financial situation closely.

Therefore, the committee recommends for needed improvement:

7.b. To require a report by February 1, 2019, regarding continued progress toward financial equilibrium. The report should include the FY2018 audit, the FY2018 management letter (if available), the school's analysis of its FY2018 operating revenues and expenditures, budget projections for FY2019 and FY2020, and a discussion that addresses the school's progress toward increasing its enrollment, achieving its ambitious fundraising goals, reducing its operating deficits, repaying its endowment borrowings, developing a financial contingency plan, and reducing its endowment draw. The report should include an update on the school's plans and progress regarding its real estate holdings, and should demonstrate that it has developed a clear financial plan for how the proceeds of any property sales will contribute to long-term institutional vitality (Standard 8, sections 8.2.1.1, 8.2.1.2, 8.2.1.3, and 8.2.1.4).

In addition, the committee recommends:

7.d. To require a report by February 1, 2021, regarding continued progress toward financial equilibrium. The report should include the FY2020 audit, the FY2020 management letter (if available), the school's analysis of its FY2020 operating revenues and expenditures, budget projections for FY2021 and FY2022, and a discussion that addresses the school's progress toward increasing its enrollment, achieving its ambitious fundraising goals, reducing its operating deficits, repaying its endowment borrowings, developing a financial contingency plan, and reducing its endowment draw (Standard 8, sections 8.2.1.1, 8.2.1.2, 8.2.1.3, and 8.2.1.4).

Facilities at PSR are in useable condition. Deferred maintenance can be noticed in most of the buildings in use. The school has recently consolidated the buildings that are being used. There seems to be sufficient space for the student population and community activities, although the school will need to continue to monitor this. There is still additional ADA and earthquake work that needs to be performed. Some classrooms were recently updated and technology was added. Faculty and staff offices appear to have adequate space. The school also appears to have adequate technology. It uses Zoom software for synchronous classes. While the school manages its own IT at this point (after the dissolution of the GTU shared services), an educational technology specialist from the GTU remains available to assist faculty in learning to teach more effectively online.

As noted above, many key administrative staff are fairly new to their positions. Support staff have also seen transition, either with new people hired or new responsibilities assigned. The evaluation committee noted that even though there was great enthusiasm for PSR by staff, there were also sometimes missteps because of the newness of the staff. Many of these were experienced by the evaluation committee itself; others were reported by staff to committee members. The committee observes that the "honeymoon" for new employees will last only a short time if they are not supported in their work and are overburdened, and that senior administrators may need to proactively seek out this information, as support staff may be reluctant to disclose these stressors to their supervisors. Regular communication, consistent narration of the school's financial status and facility plans, and a clarity of focus on the institutional mission and the programs that support that mission will strengthen the institutional environment. With so many new staff and faculty, the evaluation committee suggests that now is a good time to emphasize communication and collaboration amongst all stakeholders, and also suggests that the school continue to monitor that it has the appropriate number and qualities of personnel needed to implement the school's vision.

Therefore, the committee recommends for needed growth:

6.a. Institutional environment (Standard 8, section 8.5). Given the numerous transitions and uncertainties in recent years (internal and external to the institution), the school should carefully attend to the development of an internal institutional environment that fosters resilience and that nurtures employees in their work. The school should also continue to give attention to ensuring that it engages the number and qualities of personnel needed to implement the programs of the school, in keeping with its purpose (Standard 8, section 8.1), as well as to developing practices of communication and collaboration that strengthen the bonds of trust between institutional stakeholders, including board, administration, faculty, students, ecclesial bodies, and other partners (Standard 7, preface).

PSR no longer participates in some of the shared services with the GTU. Numerous students and staff expressed frustration with some of these transitions, some of which may simply be due to the newness of these changes at the time of the comprehensive visit, but others may be due to losses of convenience, collaboration, control, or oversight. While the evaluation committee recognizes that such transitions are inevitable, and affirms that the school has been attending to these appropriately, the committee also observes that these transitions will continue to require focused attention by the school. Therefore, the committee recommends for needed growth:

6.d. Cooperative use of resources (Standard 8, section 8.6). Given the discontinuation of the shared service offerings by the Graduate Theological Union, the school should give close attention to developing resources (on its own, through partnerships, or via outsourcing) that provide needed support for student services, financial management, institutional advancement, information technology, and other infrastructure. The school should also engage in evaluation of these new arrangements to ensure that they continue to effectively meet student and institutional needs and that they meet all federal and legal expectations (Standard 2, section 2.2).

III. EDUCATIONAL STANDARD

ES.3 Extension Education

The school has approval to offer the complete DMin at the Office of the Hawaii Conference of the United Church of Christ (1848 Nu'uuanu Avenue, Honolulu, HI 96817). The purpose of the extension site is to serve pastors and other ministers in Hawaii, particularly in the denominations served by PSR (United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, and the Christian Church [Disciples of Christ]), and who find it financially prohibitive to come to the school's main campus in Berkeley for these classes. Seminars at the extension site are taught by regular PSR faculty members who travel to Hawaii to offer these courses. Students participate in a cohort to maintain substantive ongoing face-to-face involvement, and to maintain what the PSR petition described as "a small but comprehensive community of learning." In February 2017, the Board of Commissioners reviewed the report of a focused evaluation committee to this location, which verified that the site attended appropriately to all expectations of the Educational Standard, section ES.3 (as detailed in the focused visit report); at that time, the Board voted to confirm that resources are available and appropriate to offer the DMin at that site. Because the site was visited so recently, it was not reviewed again as part of the comprehensive evaluation visit. The school does not utilize any other extension sites at this time.

ES.4 Distance Education

In 2007, PSR offered its first required MDiv course online. In 2010, approval was deferred for a comprehensive distance education program and a report was required "to be submitted to the Board of Commissioners at the school's initiative that evaluates the effectiveness of distance education courses offered thus far." In 2011, PSR was granted approval for a comprehensive distance education program. However, a report was required by May 1, 2013, regarding "a comprehensive assessment demonstrating

the effectiveness of the school's distance education courses based upon both direct and indirect assessment." This report was submitted early and accepted. The school reports that it offered five "distance classes" in fall 2017. In addition, the evaluation committee also learned while it was on-site that the school utilizes videoconferencing in a number of its other courses and programs, including courses taken by DMin students. However, because the school provided very limited information regarding distance education in their self-study (barely addressing the expectations under the Educational Standard, section ES.4), the evaluation committee had to rely heavily on interviews to understand the distance education offerings at the school

In conversations, the evaluation committee discovered that there was a serious misunderstanding of the Commission's definition of an online class. The misunderstanding was that some faculty and administrators thought that if a student used technology (videoconferencing) to participate in an on-campus class then the class was considered on-campus (and residential). However, the Educational Standard clearly states that if the student and the instructor are not in the same location then it is distance education. Thus, if a student using videoconferencing software to participate in a class, the ATS Commission considers it to be a distance education experience, and it should be monitored and evaluated as such. In addition, such videoconference experiences rarely represent best practices in distance education, particularly if they are not linked to intentional curricular design. On the other hand, the school needs to remember that the ATS Commission uses the language of "extension education" (and not "distance education") to describe the school's site in Hawaii, which could also be part of the confusion around the role of distance education (from an ATS perspective) at PSR.

Therefore, the committee recommends for needed growth:

6.c. Distance education (Educational Standard, section ES.4). As the school continues to serve new constituents, and as it adapts to the changing service offerings from the Graduate Theological Union, it should continue to attend carefully to best practices in distance education. Recognizing that ATS defines distance learning as occurring when a course is offered without students and instructors being in the same location (Educational Standard, section ES.4.1), the school should develop policies and practices that ensure consistent educational experiences regardless of modality (synchronous video, asynchronous design, hybrid, or residential). As part of this, the school should carefully review all of the expectations of the Educational Standard, section ES.4, and should consult with Commission staff as appropriate.

ES.6 Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

After the last accreditation visit in 2009, PSR has made assessment of student learning a major focus. It has created an assessment plan which collects and evaluates data and looks at both direct and indirect indicators. The student learning outcomes are noted in each degree manual. Direct measures include successful completion of required courses and a final project or paper. If fieldwork is a part of the program, fieldwork supervisor evaluations are also included in the assessment. Indirect measures include student self-evaluations at various points in the program and in some programs peer evaluations. Full program reviews are carried out on a five-year cycle. The number of student learning outcomes for each degree program may need to be simplified or refined so that the assessment process does not become onerous. It is important that student learning is not overlooked when evaluating the degree programs and that evaluation results in change as needed.

Student learning outcomes for each syllabus are also evaluated to ensure alignment with the degree program outcomes. PSR DMin students who take classes from other GTU consortial schools must show that the learning outcomes of the classes are aligned with the PSR DMin learning outcomes.

Faculty are involved in assessment. The final project or paper is assessed by faculty in the program and/or the student's project/paper advisor. Program directors collect the data and look for themes in terms of strengths and weaknesses. The accreditation committee has now become the assessment committee. This committee oversees all of the institutional assessment including student learning.

When the new "Our Transformative Future" planning document is in place, the evaluation committee suggests that the assessment committee examines the institutional assessment and student learning outcomes so that they are in alignment with the new mission and vision.

During the visit, the evaluation committee heard through conversations with staff and faculty that there were questions about the sustainability of the assessment plan. There was an expression of the need to refine the plan and process so that the assessment plan can become more simple and sustainable over the long haul especially if one takes into consideration the limited resourcing available.

Therefore, the committee recommends for needed growth:

6.b. Educational assessment (Educational Standard, section ES.6). While the school has attended carefully to student learning outcomes and degree program assessment, it should continue to refine these plans and processes in order to ensure that they are as simple and sustainable as possible while adequate to answer fundamental questions about educational effectiveness.

ES.7 Academic Guidelines

The school follows this standard in admissions, transfer of credit, shared credit in a degree program, and advanced standing either with or without credit.

ES.8 Nondegree Instructional Programs

The school has two centers: the Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies and the Ignite Institute (leadership and innovation lab which brings theology and social change together). Certificate students may take courses from these centers. The school offers five certificate programs with graduate credit: Certificate for Spiritual and Social Change, Certificate for Advanced Professional Studies, Certificate for Theological Studies, Certificate of Sexuality and Religion, and Certificate of Special Studies. PSR also offers two non-credit certificate programs: Certificate for Theological Education for Leadership and Certificate of Gender, Sexuality and the Bible. When the new planning document, Our Transformative Future, is implemented the nondegree instructional programs should be evaluated to see if they continue to support the new strategic plan.

IV. DEGREE PROGRAM STANDARDS

Degree Program Standard A. Master of Divinity

As noted in the self-study, the MDiv has historically been PSR's "flagship degree" (p.89). The goals and learning outcomes for the program are clear and appear to be in alignment with the school's overall mission. The 81-credit program meets the educational requirements for ordained ministry in a number of Protestant denominations (including the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, and the Christian Church [Disciples of Christ]). Students are further able to shape their course of study through the use of electives at PSR or throughout the GTU.

The school's assessment efforts for the MDiv degree are to be commended for their breadth, depth, and clarity. The evaluation committee observed well-stated rubrics on syllabi, and a robust field education program. Both the milestone Middler review and Capstone case studies are a benchmark for measuring and assessing students' achieved goals for the degree program and also offers the institution an ongoing

means of ensuring that the degree program is meeting the ministerial and educational needs of students. Retention is good, and faculty, the dean, and other mentors were able to articulate ways they support students in their efforts to complete the degree program. There is also clear attention to the number of students placed in appropriate vocational context. The evaluation committee particularly enjoyed conversations with alumni who clearly articulated the ways in which they are using their PSR education in their current contexts. As noted in the section on the Educational Standard, the school will want to continue to refine its assessment practices; for example, the list of learning outcome indicators (self-study, p. 90) may need to be simplified, the five-year cycle for degree program review (p. 91) will need to be monitored to ensure that it attends to student learning in addition to program effectiveness, and the capstone rubrics will need to be refined in ways that help the school implement change as a result of what it is learning (p. 92).

The evaluation committee commends the school for attending so clearly to the learning and ministerial formation of students in various forms as dictated by their context and mission statement. The attention PSR is giving to its contemporary cultural content is a strength for the institution and the committee was impressed by the way in which the entire community is living into its unique and diverse linguistic and cultural context. In its conversations with students, the evaluation committee noted that, while students were clear about why they had come to PSR and what they found valuable at the school, they seemed less clear about their vocational goals or professional outcomes. While it could be that these goals and outcomes emerge more clearly as students approach graduation, the evaluation committee suggests that the school continue to monitor issues of vocational counseling (Standard A, section A.2.4.1) and that it also be attentive to places where there might be curricular gaps in relation to student vocational goals and post-graduation placement (for example, the evaluation committee heard from alumni that they would like to see more attention paid to youth ministry and to the global character of the Church). At the same time, the evaluation committee commends the school for its attention to supervised ministry with persons who are qualified and trained in these areas, who clearly assist students as they grow in their vocational areas and ministry. The evaluation committee also affirms the school for the ways in which its revised learning outcomes have allowed greater emphasis on mission-central goals related to social location and the work of justice (self-study, p.93). This, too, appears to be a good indicator that the school's "culture of assessment" is positively impacting the school's educational mission.

Degree Program Standard B. Professional MA Program (MA in Social Transformation)

In 2014, PSR was granted approval to offer the Master of Arts (Social Transformation) as an Academic MA (Standard D). The school's self-study report has the degree listed as a Professional MA Program (Standard B). The evaluation committee evaluated the MAST using Standard B since PSR did so in the self-study. It seems that the degree program fits better under this Standard B designation (Classification II: Master of Arts in [specialized ministry]).

The MAST began in Fall 2015 and prepares students to think critically about socio-political dynamics and to be engaged in public religious leadership through coursework and fieldwork. The two arenas in which the degree program resides (classroom and field) allow for theological reflection of the praxis to occur. The ATS Fact Sheet for 2017 does not have any enrollment numbers listed under Standard B since the numbers are included under Standard D. A registration report for Fall 2017 provided by the school during the visit indicates that there were 10 MAST students registered in classes.

The MAST has five learning outcomes which the school plans to continue to revise as evaluation of this new program occurs. The learning outcomes are 1) articulate theological and ethical engagements in cultural and political analysis, especially structural inequality, systemic injustice, and institutionalized oppressions; 2) demonstrate the capacity to discern, evaluate, and support the ways that faith communities engage in collaborative partnerships with programs and organizations devoted to systemic social change for the common good; 3) articulate the unique contributions theological and ethical traditions can make to

the work of social changemaking in specific sectors, such as economic justice and development and ecological sustainability; 4) show the ability to assess and appropriate diverse, interdisciplinary strategies for changemaking drawn from the worlds of social innovation, non-profit organizations, and grass-roots community organizing; 5) demonstrate the skill to build and foster communities marked by cross-cultural humility and devoted to collaborative problem solving for transforming social systems of oppressive power. While appropriate, the learning outcomes may need to be refined so that they are simple while still being adequate. Full assessment of the degree program will occur on a five-year basis.

The degree requires 39 credit hours (6 are fieldwork with a mentor and 3 are for the special project). Required courses include 2 seminars (one on spiritual formation and the other on transformational leadership); 3 courses in social theory, ethics, and theology; 6 credits of social change electives, and the fieldwork and project. These courses cover religious heritage, cultural context, personal and spiritual formation, and a specialization. Students in the Certificate in Spirituality and Social Change program also participate in the two seminars. This increases the community of learning for the seminars.

Up to 19 credits may be taken online (usually 8000-level courses). Adequate resources including faculty, library, and support services are available to the students. The Director of Field Education aids students in identifying fieldwork sites. The MAST is a post-baccalaureate degree. Admission requirements for the degree fall within ATS requirements, including guidelines for provisional admission.

The evaluation committee observes that the school's self-study report described the MAST as a Standard B degree. However, Commission records (including the school's original petition for the degree program) list it under Standard D. Therefore, the evaluation committee recommends

7.a. To require a report by May 1, 2018, clarifying whether the Master of Arts in Social Transformation is to be understood as a Commission Standard B (Professional MA) or Commission Standard D (Academic MA) degree program. Prior to submitting the report, the school should consult with Commission staff regarding the expectation of each of these Standards, including those related to nomenclature, residency, and program content.

Degree Program Standard D. Academic MA Program (Master of Theological Studies)

Preliminary approval of the Master of Theological Studies was given in 2001. In 2005 ongoing approval was granted. The purpose of the Master of Theological Studies degree program is to provide "a general theological degree program which offers students a broad yet comprehensive education in theological studies across a range of disciplines." The degree requires 48 credits which include 12 credits in foundational courses of Biblical Studies, Historical Studies, Theology, and Ethics & Social Theory/Christian Ethics. Twenty-four credits are in the student's area of interest and twelve are general electives. A review of the program by the faculty in 2014 showed that many of the students transferred from other PSR degree programs to the MTS. Registration information for Fall 2017 received by the evaluation committee during the visit showed that there were nine MTS students registered for classes.

Learning outcomes are 1) demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the four basic theological disciplines (Bible, history, theology, and ethics), 2) bring the four disciplines into creative and critical interplay, 3) demonstrate the ability to use at least two of these theological disciplines in framing a response to a contemporary issue or problem, and 4) demonstrate advanced competency related to an area of interest. The MTS Entrance Report, the MTS Final Report, and the MTS Synthesis Essay are used to assess the program. The entrance report is a self-evaluation done by the students when they begin the program. The final report is a self-evaluation done at the end of the program to assess growth. The essay is a capstone paper graded by the student's faculty advisor who uses a common rubric. The two reports and the essay began with the Fall 2014 incoming class. Because of this and the fact that only 53 percent graduate in two years, there is as yet not much data gathered from these measures.

Up to two-thirds of the courses may be transferred from a non-PSR accredited school. Up to half of the credits may be online or distance credits. Up to 6 credits may be taken as independent study.

Adequate resources including faculty, library, and support services are available to the students. The MTS is a post-baccalaureate degree. Admission requirements for the degree fall within ATS requirements, including guidelines for provisional admission.

Degree Program Standard E. Doctor of Ministry Program

E.1 Purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and educational assessment

Pacific School of Religion offers a 24-credit minimum Doctor of Ministry degree (four relevant courses, two seminars, and six project/thesis credits) in two locations: Berkeley, CA, and Honolulu, HI. The purpose of this degree is to build both on students' MDiv theological education and their variously tested and proven ministerial leadership. There are seven articulated learning outcomes, a few of which include demonstrating critical engagement with texts and traditions, applying contextually-based approaches to social issues, developing self-reflective leadership skills, producing and communicating new knowledge about the practice of ministry, and communicating a sense of direction for a faith community. All of the courses relate to the fulfillment of program purposes and learning outcomes.

Educational assessment both within and for the degree program itself is thorough and continuous. Seminar courses are geared specifically toward reflection and skill development regarding the student project or thesis, including the creation of an annotated bibliography, description of their ministry context for study, and a project plan that includes courses to complete. Students take the DMin Continuing Seminar each year until graduation. The project/thesis is assessed using a comprehensive rubric, and those rubrics are reviewed by the program director to determine patterns of strength or weakness in particular areas and to adjust program content as needed. Overall mixed-method program reviews are conducted every five years, with the last program review conducted in Fall 2015. As part of this review, student questionnaires and course evaluations were reviewed and all learning outcomes were assessed. Graduation rates for the DMin degree from 2003-2008 were at 73%, with 48% finishing in three years. It was also noted in the program review that about 40% of DMin students complete all of their work at a distance from Berkeley, including elective courses.

E.2 Program content

Learning takes place in a variety of ways for this degree, including opportunities for both spiritual and personal development in the midst of academic development. The DMin program utilizes the cohort model as a tool for peer learning and engagement, and distance education and online courses offer opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous learning. Students are allowed to take master level courses, but they must work with faculty to agree upon coursework and enhanced readings and study that are reflective of both a doctoral level education and the student's particular project/thesis goals.

While all programs at PSR engage global and diverse contexts, the Honolulu DMin location offers the opportunity for those particular students to engage specifically with the Pacific context of ministry. Cohorts, however, are not necessarily configured by location, but also by topic of study, which offers another context to develop a community of learning. In the committee's conversations with DMin students, individuals expressed that one of the strengths of the program was the development of an engaged learning community, among other strengths.

The project/thesis is usually presented in written form, though there are exceptions to this with projects being presented as visual media or curricula/resources. Regardless of format, all projects/theses are assessed using the same rubric so that the levels of academic rigor, learning, and skill remain consistent. All students are required to present their projects/theses orally and are evaluated by their committees.

E.3 Educational resources and learning strategies

Because the DMin program is conducted in two physical locations—one being an extension site in Hawaii—as well as online and via video conference (Zoom), attention to accessing educational resources for all students in the program is crucial. PSR has given careful thought to this and has worked with the GTU Library to provide all students with the research materials they need to in order to complete their degree. Students not in Berkeley are able to request books from GTU through interlibrary loan at their local libraries. Access to certain materials for students in Hawaii takes longer than for students on the U.S. mainland depending on the location; but both faculty and the GTU Library have been very responsive in assisting these students. In the committee’s conversations with California-based students, they articulated that access to necessary materials was not an issue and that the library at GTU was excellent in obtaining articles and books when requested. The committee encourages the continued exploration of strategies to ensure adequate access to library resources for all students, particularly those in the distance education location (Standard E, sections E.3.1.3, E.3.3.3). Faculty advisors are assigned by the dean, and the number of advisees per faculty member is limited to three in order to ensure the student receives the attention they need to complete a meaningful and robust project/thesis. Faculty advisors receive orientation to the program from the program director.

The fall 2015 program review revealed that 36% of students had some difficulty accessing student services and technology assistance from a distance and that these difficulties occurred during the first few weeks of the semester. While GTU has increased its budget for Moodle and library student support, the committee also encourages PSR to implement strategies for increased support for DMin distance education students in all areas of academic and co-curricular support (Standard E, section E.3.3.4). In general, students shared with the committee their heartfelt appreciation for the program director and faculty advisors for their expertise and passion and for their attention to students’ overall academic and professional wellbeing. Students also expressed gratitude for the flexibility the program provided, as well as the challenge and rigor of the degree.

E.4 Admission

Requirements for the DMin degree are clearly stated online and include an MDiv or its equivalent and a minimum of three years in ministry after the completion of a master’s degree, among other requirements. The vast majority of students entering the DMin program at PSR hold an MDiv. While the school does not offer specialized DMin degree programs, cohorts are developed around particular project/thesis ministry areas such as pastoral care and preaching.

V. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

After reviewing all appropriate information in light of the Commission’s *Standards* and *Procedures*, the evaluation committee recommends to the Board of Commissioners the following actions:

1. To reaffirm the accreditation of Pacific School of Religion for a period of ten years, with the next comprehensive evaluation visit in fall of 2027, one term before the period of accreditation expires on March 31, 2028.
2. To approve the following degree programs:

Master of Divinity

Master of Arts (Social Transformation) (Academic MA) (*see 7a below)

Master of Theological Studies (Academic MA)

Doctor of Ministry

[Note: the school also participates in the Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degrees offered through the Graduate Theological Union, but these are listed under the GTU's accrediting history]

3. To approve the following extension site:

Office of the Hawaii Conference of the United Church of Christ (1848 Nu'uuanu Avenue, Honolulu, HI 96817), as a complete degree-granting site for the Doctor of Ministry degree.

4. To grant approval to offer comprehensive distance education: yes
5. To encourage that attention be given to maintaining and enhancing these distinctive strengths:
 - a. Institutional commitment to and embodiment of diversity that permeates the institution, as demonstrated by the senior leadership, faculty, students, and other stakeholders. This diversity not only extends to race but also global representation, gender, gender identity, sexual identity, and socio-economic status, in ways that are rarely seen in graduate theological education. In the midst of this inter-cultural environment is the shared practice of open and honest exchange among all constituencies, with the overall goal being spiritual and social transformation.
 - b. Culture of innovation, as evidenced by the school's investment in the Ignite Institute, its exploration of certificate programs and stackable credentials, its various centers and partnerships, and its understanding of theological education as being relevant in the public sphere. This includes clear attention to the school's geographical placement (including the three "valleys" of Silicon, Central, and Bay Area/East Bay) and to its selection of senior leaders who embody the mission and possibilities of the school in new ways.
 - c. Quality and commitment of faculty and staff, and the overall engagement and passion that all members of the community express toward the school.
6. To encourage that attention be given to the following areas of needed growth during the next period of accreditation, with each area linked to a specific Standard.
 - a. Institutional environment (Standard 8, section 8.5). Given the numerous transitions and uncertainties in recent years (internal and external to the institution), the school should carefully attend to the development of an internal institutional environment that fosters resilience and that nurtures employees in their work. The school should also continue to give attention to ensuring that it engages the number and qualities of personnel needed to implement the programs of the school, in keeping with its purpose (Standard 8, section 8.1), as well as to developing practices of communication and collaboration that strengthen the bonds of trust between institutional stakeholders, including board, administration, faculty, students, ecclesial bodies, and other partners (Standard 7, preface).
 - b. Educational assessment (Educational Standard, section ES.6). While the school has attended carefully to student learning outcomes and degree program assessment, it should continue to refine these plans and processes in order to ensure that they are as simple and sustainable as possible while adequate to answer fundamental questions about educational effectiveness.
 - c. Distance education (Educational Standard, section ES.4). As the school continues to serve new constituents, and as it adapts to the changing service offerings from the Graduate Theological Union, it should continue to attend carefully to best practices in distance education. Recognizing that ATS defines distance learning as occurring when a course is offered without students and

instructors being in the same location (Educational Standard, section ES.4.1), the school should develop policies and practices that ensure consistent educational experiences regardless of modality (synchronous video, asynchronous design, hybrid, or residential). As part of this, the school should carefully review all of the expectations of the Educational Standard, section ES.4, and should consult with Commission staff as appropriate.

- d. Cooperative use of resources (Standard 8, section 8.6). Given the discontinuation of the shared service offerings by the Graduate Theological Union, the school should give close attention to developing resources (on its own, through partnerships, or via outsourcing) that provide needed support for student services, financial management, institutional advancement, information technology, and other infrastructure. The school should also engage in evaluation of these new arrangements to ensure that they continue to effectively meet student and institutional needs and that they meet all federal and legal expectations (Standard 2, section 2.2).
7. To require the following reports addressing areas of needed improvement, with each action below linked to one or more specific Standards:
- a. To require a report by May 1, 2018, clarifying whether the Master of Arts in Social Transformation is to be understood as a Commission Standard B (Professional MA) or Commission Standard D (Academic MA) degree program. Prior to submitting the report, the school should consult with Commission staff regarding the expectation of each of these Standards, including those related to nomenclature, residency, and program content.
 - b. To require a report by February 1, 2019, regarding continued progress toward financial equilibrium. The report should include the FY2018 audit, the FY2018 management letter (if available), the school's analysis of its FY2018 operating revenues and expenditures, budget projections for FY2019 and FY2020, and a discussion that addresses the school's progress toward increasing its enrollment, achieving its ambitious fundraising goals, reducing its operating deficits, repaying its endowment borrowings, developing a financial contingency plan, and reducing its endowment draw. The report should include an update on the school's plans and progress regarding its real estate holdings, and should demonstrate that it has developed a clear financial plan for how the proceeds of any property sales will contribute to long-term institutional vitality (Standard 8, sections 8.2.1.1, 8.2.1.2, 8.2.1.3, and 8.2.1.4).
 - c. To require a report by April 1, 2019, regarding institutional purpose, planning, and evaluation (Standard 1). This report should demonstrate that the school is able to articulate a clear mission and intentional guiding vision that permeates all stakeholders of the institution and that serves as the framework for comprehensive institutional planning and evaluation (Standard 1, preface and section 1.1). Particular attention should be given to the ways in which this mission and vision inform and support institutional decision-making (with particular attention to programs offered, allocation of resources, and constituencies served) as well as ongoing evaluation procedures for institutional vitality (Standard 1, section 1.2).
 - d. To require a report by February 1, 2021, regarding continued progress toward financial equilibrium. The report should include the FY2020 audit, the FY2020 management letter (if available), the school's analysis of its FY2020 operating revenues and expenditures, budget projections for FY2021 and FY2022, and a discussion that addresses the school's progress toward increasing its enrollment, achieving its ambitious fundraising goals, reducing its operating deficits, repaying its endowment borrowings, developing a financial contingency plan, and reducing its endowment draw (Standard 8, sections 8.2.1.1, 8.2.1.2, 8.2.1.3, and 8.2.1.4).