REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM
for Reaffirmation of
Accreditation

To <u>Fielding Graduate University</u>

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SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of Institution and Accreditation History.

Fielding Graduate University (FGU) was founded in 1974 as Fielding Institute. FGU's mission is to provide high quality social science graduate education for mid-career professionals through a distributed education model. The original commitment of Fielding's founders to promoting social change and securing social justice remains a unifying force in support of a scholar-practitioner model for a growing range of graduate degree and certificate programs. The institution's headquarters are located in Santa Barbara, California, and it has a branch office in Washington, DC that supports student recruitment, fundraising, and strategic partnership initiatives. Its flagship PhD program in clinical psychology was an early adopter of distance education for the social sciences, and was among the first of such programs to garner accreditation by the American Psychology Association (APA). With over 1,000 students, the institution as of November 2017 offers 6 doctoral degrees, 5 MA degrees, and 13 graduate program certificates, which are housed in either the School of Psychology or School of Leadership Studies.

Having granted candidacy status to Fielding in 1978 and full initial accreditation in 1982, the Commission considered the report of its 2010 educational effectiveness review team and granted the institution eight years of re-accreditation. The Commission also called for an interim report from FGU in 2014 focused on four items of concern, including: (1) financial management and progress on the move to a new campus; (2) further development of assessment, program review, and student success efforts; (3) further development of governance structures and processes; and (4) strengthening of the IT infrastructure to support the FGU instructional model.

The current visiting team reviewed both the 2010 and 2014 FGU reports to WASC (now WSCUC), and the resulting Commission action letters. The current team was not responsible for conducting any follow-up analyses related to WSCUC sub-change actions, but did review materials from sub-change actions since 2010 and from specialized accreditation reviews with a focus on implications for the program under scrutiny as well as new program options. Notably, the APA placed the clinical psychology doctoral program on probation in 2010—just as the current regional accreditation cycle was commencing—and the success of the institution in saving the program with its APA accreditation fully restored in 2017, entailed consequential choices to maintain the quality and sustainability of all of its academic offerings.

B. Description of Team's Review Process.

The Visiting Team followed the standard procedures and schedule for re-accreditation visits as specified in the WSCUC Fall 2017 Evaluator Guide. FGU posted its self-study report with supporting evidence in August 2017, and in September 2017 the Visiting Team Chair sent team members a memo that

identified assignments for analysis of the re-accreditation materials, including lead analysts (a writer and reader) for each Component of the self-study report, each of the four Standards, and each of the four Federal Requirements forms. Early on it was determined and confirmed in consultation with the WSCUC Liaison that the supplemental Off-campus Locations Review was not applicable, and that the supplemental Distance Education Review was not necessary, since the institution is almost exclusively a distance education provider—with 23 distance education programs and 1 on-site program—and therefore the team's analysis of the entire FGU self-study process, report, and supporting evidence is framed by that curriculum delivery and student services modality.

In advance of the Offsite Review (OSR), the team requested and FGU furnished ten sets of additional evidence. In preparation for the OSR—which was held in early November 2017—each team member reviewed the FGU self-study report and the original and supplemental evidence, and then completed an OSR Team Worksheet pertaining to their own assignments. The depth of analyses called for and evident in the worksheets served the team well, resulting in an efficient OSR that enabled team members to: (i) readily confirm their comfort with the initial assignments (no changes); (ii) identify six preliminary areas of commendation; and (iii) specify eight lines of inquiry for the accreditation visit.   The preliminary commendations and lines of inquiry were shared with the senior management team of FGU in the conference call segment of the OSR. The team also noted that the institution would receive a separate communication about several supplemental data and document requests, and about the personnel and committees, teams, or other stakeholder groups that should be on the schedule for the accreditation visit. FGU received that memo in early January 2018, and responded promptly in providing the additional materials and in working with the team to craft the campus visit schedule.

The team held its accreditation visit (AV) conference call in late March 2018. Upon sharing and discussing the AV Team Worksheets prepared for that meeting, the team decided to: (i) retain the eight lines of inquiry as originally stated; (ii) set assignments for each of the scheduled AV sessions with a few changes in the draft schedule provided by FGU; and (iii) request that FGU provide one additional piece of evidence in advance of the AV plus several supplemental sets of data for inspection by the team during the AV. The evening before the AV, which was held from April 10-12, 2018, the team met to: (i) finalize the schedule; (ii) draft questions to pose during each session of the AV; and (iii) discuss how the team could best cover its most pressing questions and concerns. During the visit, the team requested and FGU promptly provided several additional pieces of evidence to clarify and confirm various statements made by FGU stakeholders during AV sessions. In addition to learning a great deal in the AV sessions about how various FGU stakeholders viewed the mission, quality, and vitality of their institution, a large number of individuals (almost three dozen) submitted feedback via the confidential email account. The comments

were overwhelming positive, especially from past and present students, about the rigor of academic programs and suitability of FGU's distance education platform for their own professional interests and life circumstances. The team factored this as well as a few instances of negative feedback into its deliberations, without compromising the identity or sourcing the specific issues of those who submitted confidential emails. Per standard practice, the team crafted its official commendations (six) and recommendations (three) the evening of the second full day, and then met the morning of the final partial day to edit the resulting drafts to final, which the Team Chair read out verbatim in a well-attended Exit Interview session.

C. Institution's Reaccreditation Report and Update: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence.

The FGU self-study report was well written and clearly organized according to the standard WSCUC format for re-accreditation reviews. The report offered a compelling case for how broadly and deeply the vision, mission, values, and academic philosophy of FGU permeate the academic programs and wider culture of the institution. The report also indicated self-awareness about the challenges faced at present by the institution, including: (i) the tradeoffs between its traditional entrepreneurial versus more structured approaches to student instruction and services; (ii) the prospects of new strategic partnerships for strengthening the institution, and (iii) the risks of several past and forthcoming years of deficit spending to accommodate new program growth.

The initial appendices provided useful additional data and documents that supported the narrative, but even in tandem with the narrative did not appear to fully acknowledge how quickly the external context, technology, and resulting market of distance education is changing. (CFR 4.7) Similarly, while the critical role of senior academic and administrative personnel in the conduct of the self-study process and preparation of the report was apparent, the extent of engagement with other stakeholders down and across the organization was not evident. (CFRs 4.5, 4.6)

The space and analytical treatment accorded to the various components of the self-study report was appropriate given the recent history, past accreditation reviews, and current concerns of the institution. However, in contrast to other sections of the report, the least rigorous inquiry was evident regarding component three on the meaning, quality, and integrity of degrees. Although the meaning of an FGU degree is consistently grounded in the adult learner, distance education, and social justice framework of the institution, the team had to rely on information in the subsequent sections of the report and AV testimony to assess stakeholder sentiments about the quality and integrity of degrees. (CFR 2.2)

The relatively large volume and wide range of supplemental materials requested by the team in advance of the OSR and for inspection during the AV attests to perceived evidentiary and analytical gaps in

the initial report and attachments. However, the team was impressed with how quickly FGU responded to requests for additional materials, and with how many individuals attended the AV sessions in person and via videoconference. The supplemental data and documents were relevant and useful to the team in sorting out how well the claims of the institution were buttressed by supporting evidence. Furthermore, the team was able to address all of its lines of inquiry and specific issues of concern during the AV. Finally, both the leadership and all other FGU stakeholders involved in the campus visit were transparent and forthcoming in responding to questions and providing the team with relevant information and insights.

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ESSAYS

Component 1: Response to previous Commission actions.

Fielding makes a strong case in its self-study report about the institution's responsiveness to previous Commission actions. The recommendations of the WSCUC 2015 review panel for an FGU 2014 interim report are most pertinent. The institution provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate continuous improvement in four areas of concern: (i) financial management and growth plans; (ii) articulation and assessment of learning outcomes; (iii) broader and deeper shared governance; and (iv) enhancing IT infrastructure to support student instruction. (CFR 1.8)

The institution noted progress made and continued challenges for each area of concern. This section provided an instructive preface for the entire self-study report, since Fielding is in the midst rather than end of an ambitious growth plan with (at present) enrollment-dependent financial resources. This is a difficult space to maneuver within, and the team applauds the University at all levels for recognizing financial management and prudence as its top institutional priority. The team concurs with the institution that the "*task ahead is to match revenue, resources, and expenses on an annual basis. We anticipate lean years ahead, with continued pressure to keep tuition low, while investing in academic resources, technology, and training and development, and while maintaining compensation*." (FGU Self-study Report, Page 8)

As evident in the body of the institution's self-study report and supporting evidence, issues of quality assurance, shared governance, and IT infrastructure remain in the foreground of FGU concern. However, as confirmed in the testimonial evidence gathered by the team during the campus visit, such action items pale in comparison to the stakes and importance placed by Fielding on its business plan. Without exception, all of the stakeholders interviewed by the team, whether on an individual or group basis, were acutely aware of the need to maintain deficit spending for the sake of program growth. The extent of institutional self-awareness about this critical challenge and the intentional focus placed on financial sustainability, bodes well for the ability of Fielding to succeed in its growth plan and maintain its compliance with WSCUC standards for regional accreditation. (CFR 3.4)

Component 2: Compliance: Review under WSCUC Standards and compliance with federal requirements; Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators.

The institution's audit of the WSCUC Standards and attendant Criteria for Review (CFRs) net very few items of concern; all told, there were only 5 of the 39 CFRs marked as a modest weakness (all were coded as 2 for "*aspects of this need our attention*"); and all of those items were coded as an A for a "*high priority to address at this time*." The CFRs that were flagged by Fielding as action items made sense to the team in the context of prior accreditation review recommendations and the current challenges highlighted by the institution in its self-study report. This included concern over: (i) accessibility of educational objectives and student achievement data (CFR1.2), (ii) sufficiency of faculty, financial, and IT resources (CFRs 3.3-3.5); and (iii) the rigor of evaluation of teaching and learning effectiveness (CFR4.4). However, it was difficult for the team to discern the rationale for the specific audit results, since the institution did not annotate its rankings with notes about why particular CFRs were coded as a strength or weakness, or as a high priority to address.

In contrast, the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (IEEI) that Fielding completed provides useful details on assessment processes, and clearly indicates how well the institution conforms to specific standards related to academic quality and program effectiveness. Similarly, the Federal Requirements Forms drafted by the institution contained instructive content that was readily confirmed by the team through inspection of documents and conversation during the campus visit with relevant academic and business affairs officers. There were some instances where the team could not directly confirm compliance with a particular facet of the forms, but this did not raise any issues of serious concern about the ability of Fielding to fully demonstrate compliance with federal requirements on credit hour and program length, marketing and recruitment, student complaint, and transfer credit policy and procedure.

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives.

Institutional Purposes (CFRs 1.1-1.2). The Strategic Plan and Strategic Diversity Plan of Fielding are especially consequential in providing clear, concise, and compelling statements about institutional purpose and goals on behalf of student success and the public good. These documents appear to be widely embraced across the institution as defining statements on the distinctive vision, mission, and values of Fielding as an institution of higher education. Both print and electronic media clearly convey the academic philosophy and educational objectives of FGU. With its traditional entrepreneurial approach to graduate student learning, plans of study are rightly highly personalized, and typically can't be publicized as pre-defined. Thus, it can be difficult for prospective and continuing students to discern how best to navigate curriculum options to fulfill learning outcomes and performance standards within a reasonable timeframe.

Integrity and Transparency (CFRs 1.3-1.8). The commitment of Fielding to academic freedom and diversity is codified in appropriate documents and widely embraced across the institution (e.g., the Faculty Handbook and Inclusion Plan, respectively). Indeed, these principles are also manifest in practice, especially in regard to diversity in student demographics and the energy and resources being devoted to inclusion and equity initiatives. While Fielding is exploring strategic partnerships, the team found no evidence of dependence on or interference from external entities regarding either its academic or business models. Similarly, the team found no issues of concern regarding transparency in policies and procedures and truthful representation to students, the public, and WSCUC. While the team has concerns regarding Strategic Plan projections, clean audits for several years are an indicator of sound business practices with appropriate financial control systems. As implied above, timely completion (CFR 1.6) is the only open item of team concern in Standard 1, which was indicated in the institution's own self-study results. Fielding recognizes the tradeoffs between its traditional self-directed and self-paced mode of student learning and more structured group-based approaches to delivery of its curriculum. The team was encouraged that the institution is self-aware of this issue and is proactive in experimenting with more structured modalities which offer the prospect of reduced time to completion of a degree.

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with this Standard.

Standard 2: Achieving educational objectives through core functions.

Teaching and Learning (CFRs 2.1-2.7). Fielding justifiably assesses that the core functions of teaching and learning as described in Standard 2 are a distinctive strength of the institution. Long an innovator in graduate-level distributed learning, the institution's founding on a philosophy of student competency and individualized learning, not the accumulation of courses or credits, was ahead of its time. Validation of professional and disciplinary standards is established through the use of external reviewers for dissertations and periodic academic program reviews, and, for example, clinical internship placement and APA accreditation of the Clinical Psychology PhD.

Scholarship and Creative Activity (CFRs 2.8-2.9). Core faculty are appropriately credentialed and generally active scholars, and take collective responsibility for establishing and assessing appropriate standards of performance. Fielding must continue to commit to recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of core faculty to teach, supervise student scholarship, and administer each program the institution offers. Fielding leadership has established a strong foundation for the pursuit of external funding opportunities to diversify revenue sources while advancing institutional reputation, building partnerships, and supporting faculty scholarship. The success of these efforts will rest on core faculty realizing benefits from the new

opportunities and embracing them. As an institution without faculty rank or tenure, processes for periodic performance evaluation and contract renewal must establish clearly how faculty research and scholarship are valued and supported (CFR 2.8). Equally important, mechanisms for time base overload and/or summer salary require development if faculty are to see opportunities to materially supplement salaries through sponsored research.

Student Learning and Success (CFRs 2.10-2.14). The institution has acknowledged and moved to address the challenges of attrition and slow time to PhD degrees (CFRs 2.1, 2.10). The nature of students served (generally mid-career professionals) advises the challenge is natural, and expectations should be set accordingly. Nominal times-to-degree posted now are shorter than recent observation, which means the institution must follow through to see the improvement realized, and failing that take care to accurately reflect typical experience to prospective students in recruitment materials. The application of clearly defined entry-level requirements (CFR 2.2) runs somewhat counter to the flexible and learner-centered design of the institution's programs, yet such requirements are likely a direct mechanism to address attrition and time-to-degree.

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that irrespective of recognized areas for improvement, the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with this Standard.

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

Faculty and Staff (CFR 3.1-3.3). It was evident during the team's visit that Fielding is staffed with well-qualified faculty and staff, who have the requisite skills and backgrounds to be successful and to enhance the mission of the institution. It was noted that Fielding has a diverse staff that are committed to the Fielding mission. During the review, the team learned that recently turnover has been in the 20% range, which the team believes is unsustainable. However, it was also recognized in the same conversation, that some staff had been employees for 20 years or more, indicating that Fielding can be an excellent place to work.

The team learned during the visit that there is an ongoing effort to link annual performance reviews to the strategic plan through a process of performance mapping. Staff appreciated the transparency of upper management, including of the Fielding president, to keep them informed of significant events going on and the future planning of the institution. The organization is aligned around the principles outlined in a book "The Leadership Challenge" and people were well versed in their performance expectations. Benefits were generally felt to be good at Fielding, while there was some concern over pay given the surrounding

standard/cost of living. Staff voices felt heard as evident in the impact of the Staff Council, and there were examples where staff input had changed a decision (timing of changes in HSA plan).

Fiscal, Physical, and Informational Resources (CFR 3.4-3.5). Fielding currently finds itself at a financial crossroads. The institution is simultaneously addressing declining enrollments and the financial implications of such in their core legacy programs. At the same, FGU is attempting to grow into new areas that fit within their mission and market niche. This requires the institution to reduce or contain costs in their core programs, in order to invest in staff, faculty, marketing, and systems to support new programs which are deemed as critical to long-term sustainability. While Fielding has received unqualified financial audits, a review of those financial statements indicate deficits in 2 of the last three years. Further, their current 5-year financial forecast projects deficit spending for the next three fiscal years (17/18 through 20/21). Reserves are available to fund this, and the board fully supports the direction Fielding is taking. This is a strategy fraught with risk and if new programs do not generate the projected revenue, even larger deficits than forecasted could ensue.   Helping to offset the financial commitment to the new programs, Fielding is making an effort to diversity revenue through the development of partnerships and enhanced philanthropy efforts. The concern remains, however, that larger than forecasted deficits would seriously impact the ability of FGU to remain sustainable over the long term. The team recommends that Fielding create a formal contingency plan should enrollment projections not materialize.

IT Infrastructure is critical area that requires continued investment. Improvements have been made since the prior WSCUC accreditation visit, but more needs to be done. The learning management system is an older version of Moodle, and the Ellucian Colleague ERP system needs to be upgraded after a thorough review. There are holes as well in IT staffing with an open manager and director position. The team recommends that Fielding prepare a formal IT Strategic Plan, which would clearly articulate the current state of the IT infrastructure, including current staffing, the future IT infrastructure and staffing needed to support their mission and growth plans, and which outlines the timeline and costs needed to move from current to future state.

Organizational Structures and Decision Making Processes (CFR 3.6-3.10). The team's visit to Fielding was encouraging given staff and faculty who have integrity and who are committed to the mission of the institution. It appeared that organizational structures are well established and that people understand their roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, with clear lines of command. Decisions appear to be made according to established structures. The president and CFO are full-time Fielding employees and appear to have good relationships with the board. It was noted that board involvement appeared appropriate and that trustees understand their fiduciary responsibilities. Board members are diverse and have a broad knowledge base to draw upon to aid and guide Fielding. FGU faculty are well qualified in their roles and

desire to provide quality education to their students. Shared governance continues to be worked on and while improvements have been made, this is an area the team suggests needs additional attention.

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that irrespective of recognized areas for improvement and the risks of ambitious growth plans with limited resources, the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with this Standard.

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

Quality Assurance Processes (CFRs 4.1-42.)   Fielding assesses student learning at the course level through its certificates of completion (COC's). The institution has collected a great deal of COC data, but it's unclear how all degree programs or the university as a whole evaluate or makes consistent use of that data. At an individual student level, it appears to be very useful for identifying students who need improvement to move on in their chosen academic programs. Similarly, the doctoral program in clinical psychology finds the assessment tool useful in their ongoing satisfaction of APA accreditation requirements. However, there appear to be few institution-wide or programmatic standards for use or interpretation of longitudinal COC data. It could represent a great treasure-trove of assessment opportunity, but assessment plans and guidelines need to be articulated to take advantage of the data for broad assessment purposes.

Fielding has admirably developed sufficient institutional research capacities to inform institution decision making, program review, and assessment of student learning. These efforts are relatively young. The team could not yet verify that the results of institutional inquiry, research, and data collection are used at an institutional level to establish priorities, allocate financial resources, and improve quality and effectiveness of instruction in all programs. The team is uncertain how capstone projects (dissertations, theses, etc.) are assessed against the institution's three core learning outcomes and could not identify systematic efforts to use assessment data to improve pedagogy, curricula, or student learning. However, it is evident to the team that the institution is on the right path and well-positioned to make use of the institution's assessment data for these purposes in the future. The team suggests that Fielding encourage its faculty to partner with its institutional research staff for routine assessment of institutional-level learning outcomes. This should also be among the documented rights and responsibilities of the faculty.

Institutional Learning and Improvement (CFRs 4.3-4.7). The institution has definitely considered the changing environment of higher education with specific consideration of the needs of independent adult learners, emphasizing the needs of specific under-served communities of potential adult learners in the African-Americans, Latinx, and Native American communities. Fielding has made recent changes to its existing programs to shorten times to degrees, and is developing several new academic programs of shorter

duration (MA and certificate programs), with an eye toward attracting new students seeking career-related credentials. These academic program developments fit well with the institution's diversity and inclusion initiatives and its historic commitment to social justice issues.

The senior administration and board of trustees are cooperatively engaged in developing these programs, remaining mindful of the institution's mission, vision, and values, as well as its core academic goals (critical thinking, scholarly writing, and diversity). Existing core faculty who do not also serve in administrative roles expressed feelings of exclusion and marginalization regarding the development of these new programs. They indicated a desire for greater participation and oversight of new program development, and expressed dismay that they were merely informed of these new initiatives by the senior administration, rather than being enlisted as active participants in their development. The team recognizes that Fielding's current faculty governance rules do not mandate faculty oversight or participation in the development of new programs, and further recognizes the need for quick administrative action to bring new programs online in service of budgetary exigency. In the future, the team encourages Fielding senior management to engage faculty more broadly to share in leadership and development responsibilities related to new academic programs, and these rights and responsibilities should be delineated in formal university policy documents.

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that irrespective of recognized areas for improvement, the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with this Standard.

Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (IEEI). Fielding completed its IEEI in a sufficiently thoughtful fashion. As the team notes elsewhere in this report, the institution has a deliberate approach to the establishment of learning outcomes at all levels and a genuine culture of assessment. This approach is consistent with a rooted institutional philosophy of competency-based education, and is not surprisingly reflected in the IEE table. Learning outcomes are established and published at the institutional and all program levels, and the faculty's responsibility for the process is confirmed. All programs (except the newest) have undergone academic review since 2014. A significant degree of institutional learning is also evident in the IEE and the institutional report narrative. In particular, as the self-study report notes, the "*Inventory was completed twice*" (Page 14); action undertaken to remedy insufficient attention to outcomes and assessment within certain programs, is a credit to this process. (CFRs 2.3, 4.3)

Graduate programs naturally involve opportunities to assess student work beyond course performance – writing portfolios, comprehensive exams, theses and dissertations – and the institution places justifiable weight on measuring student achievement through these instruments. Course-level

Certificates of Completion (CoCs) however remain a central mechanism for assessment of student learning. CoCs were designed as a more detailed assessment of competency established through coursework in lieu of letter grades. The institutional report details frank discussions during the report's preparation between faculty and leadership regarding their effectiveness, resulting in deliberate changes. A consensus further emerged during the site visit that data collected from CoCs each term should be analyzed more thoroughly and generate action plans to "close the loop" on assessment.

The most evident gap in FGU's IEEI is a pressing need to document formal faculty governance procedures at the institutional level. The team recommends that Fielding should develop and document clear rights and responsibilities that are accorded to core faculty and adjunct faculty in the areas of academic policy, curriculum design, and assessment of student learning outcomes, peer review, program review, and program development at both the institutional and programmatic levels. (CFRs 2.4, 3.10)

Federal Requirements. A careful review of the FGU catalog, policy documents, course schedules, syllabi, and program review documents shows that the institution provided sufficient evidence to confirm that the FGU complies with federal standards for assigning academic credit, fair marketing and recruitment practices, responding to student complaints, and transfer of credit.

1. Credit hour and program length. FGU values most of its courses at 4 semester credit hours, which is consistent with graduate-level programs across the country. The course schedule, academic catalog, and individual course syllabi combined indicate that the quantity of work and level of time and engagement expected from students for each course is reasonable and consistent across programs. The institution's grades and credit value policy is posted in its academic catalog. The institution has curricular approval and degree program review processes in place at the program level. However, the team could not identify how the institution reviews or validates its credit values after courses have been approved, or which officer of the institution is charged with that validation. The institution could consider annual audits of a representative sample of courses to confirm whether the credit values assigned are appropriate and identify the party responsible for oversight explicit in its policy statements. . The team concluded that irrespective of areas for improvement, FGU provided sufficient evidence to confirm compliance of the institution with federal requirements on credit hour and program length.

2. Marketing and recruitment. Outcomes data by program is available, showing the average time to complete a degree and total cost of a program. The website also contains information about curricula, which outlines the course and number of terms it requires to complete a degree, as well as tuition and fees data for those programs based on pre-defined terms or units. The team confirmed with academic affairs leadership that tuition and fees data are available for all programs, but that the institution has not been able to easily reflect the total cost to complete individualized degree options on the website as students

vary in courses taken by semester and the number of total semesters they need to be enrolled. The team viewed the explanation and rates on the website to be too problematic to infer accurate total costs for each degree. However, it is reasonable to presume that there is sufficient information available for students and prospective students to calculate the amount on their own given their personal plan of study.

Fielding does maintain a "Gainful Employment" section on their website for its certificate programs, which lists total costs and the types of jobs its graduates are qualified for with program completion. Additionally, Fielding maintains required consumer information in accordance with Higher Education Opportunity Act, and lists the required information.   In its self-review of this document, Fielding indicates that they do not provide information about the employment of their graduates stating that, "*Most Fielding students are adult learnings with employment before admittance into and while enrolled in their respective programs.*" Fielding might want to engage a search engine optimization firm to review their website. There are a few broken links to data and some information that is hard to find. Also, it doesn't appear that data is available for all programs (i.e., the PhD in Clinical Psychology). The team concluded that irrespective of areas for improvement, FGU provided sufficient evidence to confirm compliance of the institution with federal requirements on marketing and recruitment.

3. Student complaints review. FGU can demonstrate that it maintains procedures for collecting, tracking, and resolving student complaints and grievances. As described in its academic catalog, informal procedures are observed first. Formal grievance procedures, including appeals, are available when informal procedures fail to achieve resolution. Procedures are determined at the program level, but where they are unspecified there is a university-wide procedure to review and resolve complaints. The team also reviewed raw records of complaint files and found that FGU provided sufficient evidence to confirm compliance of the institution with federal requirements on student complaints policy and procedure.

4. Transfer policy review. Institutional policies on transfer credit are program-specific and are documented in FGU's academic catalog. Each program maintains authority over how much transfer credit students may request in each program, among various Fielding programs, and under what circumstances. The academic affairs administration posts the terms of transfer credit policies on its website, for the university as a whole, for its various programs, and for programs that enjoy articulation agreements with other institutions. Fielding's Transfer and Articulation Handbook is easily discoverable through the university academic catalog. Procedures for requesting transfer credit are also described in program-level publications.

The team congratulates FGU for improving policy transparency by consolidating all transfer credit policy information formerly delineated in handbooks or other decentralized documents into the university's official academic catalog. This provides prospective students and other constituents with a single

authoritative source of policy information and eliminates the duplication of policy maintenance efforts among staff. Ease of discovery notwithstanding, FGU's transfer and articulation policies are clear and appear to be fairly applied. The team was satisfied that the institution provided sufficient evidence to confirm that FGU's transfer of credit policies conform to federal requirements. (CFRs 1.6, 2.14)

Component 3: Degree Programs: Meaning, quality and integrity of degrees.

The commitment of FGU to articulating the meaning and ensuring the quality and integrity of its degrees is evident on multiple fronts, including in the institution's Strategic Plan (2017-2020) and Strategic Diversity Plan (2017-2020). For example, the first of six strategic plan goals is to "*Lead student-centered education – to ensure that our students experience a creative and challenging learning environment, we will foster strong faculty-student relationships, enhance inclusiveness and diversity, and provide excellent student support.*" The university ILOs presumably also provide a unifying framework for degree as well as certificate programs, and FGU provided voluminous material in its self-study report appendices on curriculum design, student learning outcomes, and student achievement expectations. Where relevant, FGU utilizes and benefits from external validation from specialized accreditation and licensing agencies to inform and assure the meaning, quality, and integrity of various degrees. Notably, its flagship PhD program in clinical psychology was among the first of its kind with a distance education modality to receive accreditation from the APA. Given the institution's significant legacy in this doctoral program, the team concluded that it is imperative that the institution attends fully to the specific issues of degree meaning, quality, and integrity that were raised when the APA placed the program on probation, as well as to the relevant findings of improvement when the APA removed the probation status of the program.

The self-study report focuses on and clearly grounds the meaning of its graduate degree programs in the mission and academic philosophy of the institution relative to the professional interests and personal circumstances of its target student population (i.e., adult learners, working professionals). In contrast, the report only alludes to how the institution addresses issues of degree quality and integrity, within the closing paragraphs of that chapter. The team was able to leverage material presented in other report chapters and corresponding supporting evidence to dig deeper into these two facets of program vitality and evaluation. Furthermore, the open forums with faculty and students during the campus visit were especially instructive to the team as it probed further into the nature in principle and practice of the quality and integrity of degree programs at Fielding. (CFR 2.2)

FGU faculty whether core or adjunct, were consistently focused on setting high expectations for their students and supporting them in whatever ways are needed to maintain high standards of academic performance. The progression from didactic course-based instruction to independent project-based

production appears clear and consistent with higher education norms and best practices for the sequencing and progression of learning challenges in graduate degree programs. Similarly, given close relationships with their students (most of whom are working professionals), faculty had no concerns about the integrity of degrees in regard to authentication of authorship and accountability for work product.

With few exceptions, students: (i) recognized the importance of and applauded the FGU mission, academic philosophy, and scholar-practitioner model for instruction; (ii) attested to the rigor of their programs; (iii) appreciated the flexibility provided by the distance education platform and self-paced modes of instruction; and (iv) praised the level of commitment among both academic and administrative personnel to their professional and personal success. Equally clear and consistent, was a call by students for additional opportunity to engage with their faculty and student colleagues in face-to-face settings. Students welcomed the conversation with the team and further dialogue with the institution about how to open up additional avenues for collaboration; they also offered several creative suggestions as such, including a videoconference call for "*student-in-residence programs*" and a chat room call for a "*Fielding semester at sea*." The team encourages the institution to capitalize on the student energy and enthusiasm generated by the re-accreditation review to explore these issues and options in much greater detail than a brief campus visit can afford.

The team focused its analysis fundamentally on degree programs, and found genuine concern among faculty leadership and faculty at large about how to best align MA programs with the traditional meaning of a Fielding doctoral degree. However, information was not presented in the report or addressed in any detail during the campus visit about how the institution will safeguard the quality and integrity of its master's degree programs, when the focus is on applied learning rather than research innovation. The team supports and encourages the institution to continue investigation of how Certificates of Completion and more structured curriculum models can best be adapted to fit the needs of MA programs. Further, although WSCUC does not dictate that certificate programs are subject to the same type of scrutiny, comparable attention to the meaning, quality, and integrity of non-degree programs would be especially useful given declining or flat enrollment in established degree programs and the growing importance of multiple new certificate programs to meet financial needs. This appears even more critical given the distance education platform of the institution, its traditional entrepreneurial model for student learning, and the increasing reliance on adjunct faculty. (CFR 3.1)

The team recognizes that as a new component of WSCUC re-accreditation reviews, many institutions are struggling with how best to address the meaning, quality, and integrity of their degrees. The meaning of a Fielding degree does not appear in question. However, the team suggests that the institution should develop a more systematic and sustainable approach to investigating and engaging a

wide cross-section of stakeholders about the quality and integrity of degree programs, and secondarily of certificate programs as well. In conjunction with or as a key facet of assessment protocols and program reviews, this should prove fertile ground for early detection and prompt remediation of faculty and student issues and concerns toward continuous program improvement. (CFR 4.4)

Component 4: Educational Quality: Student learning, core competencies, and standards of performance at graduation.

Chapter 4 of the institutional report provides a concise summary of the university-wide competencies, and how they derive from FGU's mission, vision, and values. Fielding has a coherent institutional philosophy expressive of its mission to promote inclusion and social justice, and this philosophy clearly infuses the work of students in pursuit of competency in: (i) diversity, (ii) critical thinking, and (iii) scholarly writing. Learning outcomes at the program and course levels and curricular maps are developed by the faculty within this framework and relevant disciplinary standards, and are posted on course syllabi, on the web, and in the academic catalog. Individual programs approach the further communication of performance standards and expectations to students differently, including in program handbooks and a doctoral competencies seminar in the HD and ODC doctoral programs. (CFR 2.3)

As an institution of exclusively graduate programs, Fielding has a clear orientation toward student scholarship and professional practice. At the doctoral level rigorous scholarship represents the primary competency, and the dissertation as the ultimate assessment instrument. At the master's level, outcomes are appropriately established to focus on the acquisition of theoretical mastery and the application of theory to professional practice. Portfolios of written work, comprehensive exams, and capstone projects are also designed to assess mastery at key stages of programs. Across all programs course assessment is undertaken through the Certificates of Completion (CoCs) evaluating student achievement in each course. The CoCs reflect a culture of assessment, but we found some consensus that the institution could do more with these data it reliably collects, i.e., better analyze patterns of relative weakness in achievement, make deliberate changes to address them, and address disparities in progress across racial, gender, age, and other categories.

Throughout its history, Fielding has approached assessment with a philosophy recognizable today as "competency based", a natural match to the focus on student centered, self-defined inquiry. The latter has evolved more recently, as collaboration and team scholarship emerged as best practices nationally for graduate training, with clear benefits to learning. As this evolution continues, Fielding will need to continue to adapt learning outcomes and assessment instruments. For example, should collaboration become a skill, value, or competency in itself to reflect the modern professional environment?

Fielding knows the student population they serve well, and is founded on confidence that neither distraction from career responsibilities nor the limited opportunities for face-to-face interaction undermine rigorous standards of performance at the graduate level. To the contrary, students' maturity and professional experience were consistently cited as advantages producing novel and meaningfully-applied student work. The reputation of the institution relies on demonstrating the authenticity of this to outside scholars, professional practitioners, and prospective students. External validation of performance standards is found through the use of external dissertation readers and for the clinical psychology PhD the clinical internship requirement and APA accreditation as well. The team encourages Fielding to further promote scholarly publication of scholarly work that includes students, and conference presentations. Fielding must work diligently to continue to demonstrate compliance with APA standards and closely follow recommendations from that commission, as with recent efforts to raise the percentage of internship sites that are themselves accredited. (CFR 2.7)

Fielding monitors individual student progress and achievement at the program level, and advising is undertaken by both faculty and staff advisers. Deficiencies result in an individualized Progress Improvement Plan. Most importantly, the institution has developed new resources in response to results indicating patterns of deficiency, e.g. a virtual writing center, the doctoral competence seminar in HD/ODC, and additional courses in research methods. Nonetheless, the team heard a common refrain that the data collected from course CoCs could be used more systematically to identify and support struggling students and promote their success.

Component 5: Student Success: Student learning, retention, and graduation.

The population of students Fielding serves, in particular their status as working professionals pursuing graduate study on evenings and weekends, challenge conventional definitions and standards of student success. Retention and graduation rates are expected to be somewhat higher than in traditional full-time graduate programs, and time-to-degree longer. Students are successful when learning outcomes and competencies are achieved, and the institution has provided pathways and support according to their motivations. Nonetheless, high attrition and slow time-to-degree in doctoral programs are still problematic, especially noting that doctoral students remain a majority of overall enrollment.

Chapter 5 of the institutional report details some student success goals: attrition below 15% annually; 80% of persisting students making good progress; at least 50% eventual graduation rate; a majority of graduates doing so within the nominal time specified; no students exceeding nominal time by more than 50%. Generally the master's and certificate programs meet these goals today. Significant challenges remain with respect to Fielding's doctoral programs.

In the table requested by the review team detailing incoming cohort sizes, persistence, and graduation by program for 2006 – 2016, the "published time to complete" at the time each cohort arrived is also reported. For the Human Development PhD, published nominal time was reduced for the 2016 cohort to just 3.5 years, down from 5 years in 2015 and 6 years in 2014. The new IECD Phd is also published at 3.5 years to complete. Leadership for Change EdD is now 3 years (previously 4.5 to 6), Organizational Development & Change PhD is 3.5 (previously 5 to 6), Media Psychology PhD is 3.5 (previously 4.5 to 6). (The other programs do not show similar changes in published nominal time to complete.)

Observed historical time-to-degree in Fielding's doctoral programs make these reduced nominal times to completion difficult to justify. Among the cohorts entering the Human Development PhD program between 2006 and 2014, just 7% earned the degree within 4 years. The Leadership for Change EdD program's 3 year nominal time is similarly inconsistent with just 13% of students earning the degree in that time since 2006. The corresponding figures for Organizational Development & Change PhD, Clinical Psychology PhD, and Media Psychology PhD are 10%, 6%, and 12%, respectively. None of the PhD programs has achieved a 10 year graduation rate higher than 47%, with Media Psychology the lowest at 39%. The EdD program has achieved a 50% graduation rate, but not until 8 years from start of the program.

The team understands that projecting reduced time to doctoral degrees in the future derives from recent curriculum reforms undertaken to achieve precisely this goal, and on the growing "pipeline" of students who enter these programs having first completed a certificate. Nonetheless, students recruited to doctoral programs must be provided accurate information regarding their likely experience, and posted times to degree completion should reflect a more typical experience, not an ideal achievable by only the best prepared and dedicated student, at least until greater evidence is available that reforms designed to shorten the programs are doing so. (CFRs 1.6, 2.10)

Component 6: Quality Assurance and Improvement: Program review, assessment, use of data and evidence.

FGU has demonstrated good student learning outcome assessment practices at the course level through its certificates of completion. It has also developed institution-wide doctoral competencies (diversity, critical thinking, and scholarly writing) that apply in its terminal degree programs. The institution applies various means of assessing these data within each of its programs, but they're applied most directly in the doctoral programs. Faculty on the Educational Effectiveness Team described challenges in making broad sense of COC data at the institutional level, and at the MA and certificate level, and in practical training and internship work. However, they also described how specific programs have utilized COC data to justify curricular changes and faculty course assignments to establish baseline competencies for students who are at the start of their academic journeys.

FGU has demonstrated that it conducts program-level assessment for its degree programs on a regular schedule. It has not articulated student learning goals specific to each of its certificate programs, nor described how learning outcomes differ among certificate programs. Since the certificate programs may serve as a funnel for future enrollments in degree programs, the team encourages FGU to dedicate attention to their curricular development, faculty oversight, student learning outcomes, and related assessments in these areas. The team believes ownership by dedicated core faculty members committed to the ongoing assessment of these developing programs will be critical to their success.

FGU has established schedules for program reviews and special, program-specific accreditations for its degree programs. These primarily serve the university's doctoral programs and its MA programs to a somewhat lesser extent. The core faculty in those programs appear to be deeply invested in the success of each program, student learning, and in ongoing improvements to both. Similarly, students in these programs expressed enthusiastic appreciation for the level of academic rigor in their programs and the quality of their relationships with Fielding faculty and staff.

The institution provided no evidence of program review schedules or similar levels of faculty engagement in its certificate programs. WSCUC does not require evidence of program reviews in certificate programs, but since Fielding has identified these shorter programs as feeders for its degree programs, the team suggests that the institution consider developing basic program review plans for these programs, in part to determine if they're successfully producing well-prepared students for its own degree programs.

Where program reviews exist, some common themes emerge across reviewed curricula:

- The need for greater structure and institutional support to close assessment feedback loops;
- The need for sufficient resources (funding, staff, data) to administer ongoing improvements;
- The need for reliable, centralized, longitudinal data to inform assessment activities.

Programs that undergo routine review report that those reviews are indeed broadly participatory, including students, core faculty, and appropriate academic leadership. They do not appear to include adjunct faculty to the same extent. Since non-core faculty deliver a substantial portion of instruction in some of the MA programs and supervise most clinical placements, FGU should consider including adjunct representation in program reviews going forward. Doing so will require training, documentation, and engagement from core faculty. (CFRs 2.4, 2.7)

Component 7: Sustainability: Financial viability, preparing for the changing higher education environment

The team considers FGU to be under significant financial pressure, given its recent history of operational deficits and declining enrollments. The institution has filed independent financial audits and has made aggressive but reasonable plans to increase revenues. However, it is not clear that the plan for

increasing revenue includes developing buy-in and oversight among existing core faculty members, or whether existing core faculty members from extant doctoral programs will be reallocated to the newer MA and certificate programs identified as targets for enrollment growth. (CFR 3.1)

Fielding's financial picture is undergoing change as the management team and trustees seek to transform the instruction and embrace the future of higher education for social science distance education. In recent years, Fielding has experienced financial deficits and has had to adjust to declining enrollment, which based on our conversations during the visit at one time was as high as 1600 and is now hovering around 1000 students. Fielding has developed a comprehensive Strategic Plan which clearly articulates the risks that the institution faces and the action steps they need to take to grow their institution. The accompanying five-year financial plan portrays a difficult and risky future for the institution, but it also provides a clear picture of their future prospects, and provides a roadmap on exactly what must be done in order to be successful. (CFR 4.6)

While there have been recent issues with the financial performance of legacy programs, as indicated by declining net tuition revenue, Fielding was able to demonstrate during our visit that this situation had stabilized. Past history also indicates that Fielding can secure success in the launch of new programs focused on market demand, and this is where the institution continues to focus its attention. At the same time, Fielding is actively seeking partnerships with HBCU's, obtaining grants, growing philanthropy, and is exploring alternatively delivery systems. This Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3 approach provides focus on each segment of their future financial and growth plan and is well thought out and organized.

Resulting from this approach are clear challenges. Tier 1: to carefully manage the existing stable of programs, reducing costs in these areas as enrollments remain flat and/or potentially decrease; Tier 2: simultaneously developing, marketing and curating the growth of new programs, investing in the start-up costs and enrolling students in yet unproven program offerings. Tier 3: seek alternative forms of revenue via grants or philanthropy, which has some promise but because it has not been fully developed, is not reflected in their five-year financial plan.

The team commends Fielding for their proactive approach and attention to detail in the development of their strategic plan and five-year financial plan. Both senior management and the trustees are fully aware and supportive of the plan. (CFR 3.9) By developing these plans, Fielding shines a light on the issues they face and on the extent of efforts to confront and manage through those issues. However, the team is concerned that the growth plans of the University are risky, especially the current dependence on tuition and fees as the primary source of revenue. The president acknowledged this risk, by stating they were trying to "*jump the canyon in one leap*" with the understanding that two leaps across a canyon is simply not possible.

The board approval for using Fielding's reserves to fund deficits as the institution implements its strategic plan demonstrates commitment throughout the organization. Nevertheless, the team did not find any formal contingency plans should a worst case scenario could occur. That worst case would be ballooning deficits with further enrollment declines in legacy programs while new program enrollments fail to materialize, despite heavy investment spending. Current cash reserves are estimated at $10.5M, with $4.4M in projected deficits (based on 4/5/18 Five-year plan) leaving some additional cushion should a worst case scenario develop. Other options for Fielding, should deficits grow, would be to further reduce costs and leverage equity in the property owned by the institution. To ensure Fielding is prepared for the unplanned, the team recommends the institution closely and continuously monitor program enrollments and the financial results. To prepare for the worst case, the team further recommends that Fielding develop a contingency plan to address deficits, should the growth plans and revenue generation not materialize as expected.   (CFRs 3.4, 3.7)

 Of particular note are the reports that Fielding's financial team prepares. Forecasts, budgets and actual reporting against metrics are clear, concise and well understood. It appears that variance reports are prepared on a timely basis and that the team is proactive in using them to correct for issues during the year. The five-year financial plan, University strategic plan and other documents bear the marks of highly skilled and professional team, intent on providing accurate and timely feedback to management and the board. The Accreditation team is left with the impression that while there are obstacles and challenges in Fielding's future, management is fully aware of their financial picture. (CFR 3.6)

Component 8: Optional essay on institutional specific themes.

Not Applicable.

Component 9: Reflection and plans for improvement.

Fielding Graduate University is at a critical inflection point in its history as a relatively unique institution of higher education. With ambitious growth plans amidst several prior and forthcoming years of deficit spending, there is little margin for error, and the institution must remain nimble in identifying and remediating any emergent gaps between its aspirations and its operations. Although the institutional report does not devote a great deal of space to summarizing the findings, conclusions, and implications of the self-study process, Fielding clearly recognizes the challenges it faces in meeting its financial goals with new program growth and without sacrificing the quality of student outcomes or compromising the distinctive mission and academic philosophy of the institution.

FGU has a proud heritage of and persistent commitment to educating adult learners through pedagogies that rely on student independence and strong self-motivation. This heritage informs and

supports the institution's character as articulated in its vision, mission, and values statements. FGU's educational programs align with the institutional mission from a curricular standpoint. From an operational standpoint, the institution is challenged by the inefficiencies inherent in delivering an education that is heavily reliant on the individual goals of each adult learner. It is evident from the institution's report and appendices that its programs with shorter times to completion, more academic structure, and less independent work enjoy higher enrollments and higher completion rates than programs that rely on less structured, more independent curricula, which take a longer time to complete.

It is also evident that the most impactful faculty and instructional resources are devoted to its doctoral programs. However, the institution's plans for growth hinge on newer, shorter programs which are as yet unstaffed, and that were not developed with the cooperation of core faculty in existing programs. It appears that the institution faces a serious tension here: its characteristic approach to independent learning and its areas of historic academic strength are at odds with its need for higher enrollments, faster program completions, and increased revenue. FGU must resolve the tension between these competing interests, with appropriate leadership from the faculty, for its growth plans to come to fruition and to maintain the health of the institution's academic community.

FGU is dedicated to both student and institutional learning, and the team concurs with the continuous improvement action items noted by Fielding in the closing chapter of its self-study report. These include the need to: (i) devote additional resources to data infrastructure and services; (ii) design and implement a more robust program review system; (iii) increase the rigor of assessment at the course level and for MA as well as doctoral programs; (iv) adapt Certificates of Completion and create attendant rubrics to meet the needs of all academic programs; (v) promote effective teaching and learning through technology with concerted investment in IT infrastructure and services; and (vi) enhance communication mechanisms especially in regard to awareness about institutional policy and procedures. Fielding recognizes that all of this comes at a cost, and the institution must remain vigilant to make good on its stated closing commitment to carefully monitor the success of its plan for new program growth and financial sustainability (FGU Self-study Report, Page 62). (CFRs 3.5, 3.7)

SECTION III – OTHER TOPICS: Substantive Change

In addition to examining the new program feasibility studies and specialized accreditation reviews provided by FGU, the team requested and was granted access to the raw materials of the sub-change actions submitted by Fielding to WSCUC since the start of its current accreditation cycle in 2010. The team inspected both the sub-change proposals and resulting review panel findings and recommendations for three new degrees, including: (i) an MA in education, which was granted approval in 2012; (ii) a PhD in

infant and early childhood development, which was not approved initially in 2014 and then approved in 2015 with revision and resubmission of the sub-change proposal; and (iii) an MA in counseling and supervision, which was reviewed but not approved by the Commission in late 2017.

The institution did not address the results of these sub-change reviews in its self-study report, and the team did not discern the extent to which the issues and concerns raised by the WSCUC sub-change panels and Commission rulings remain explicitly in the foreground of institutional thinking and planning. The sub-change review outcomes remain informative and highly relevant to the institution as it pursues growth plans, and the team encourages the institution to systematically revisit its recent sub-change and comparable specialized accreditation reviews. Resulting insights could prove instrumental to informing analysis of the progress of the institution in successfully implementing its academic and business plans and to maintaining both regional and specialized accreditation. (CFR 4.3)

SECTION IV – COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commendations. The team commends Fielding Graduate University for the following six accomplishments and practices:

1. Clearly and consistently articulating its mission, vision, and academic philosophy, which are expressed in its curriculum, strategic plan, inclusion plan, and support for student services. (CFR 1.1)
2. A 2017-2020 strategic plan that is well-written with appropriate goals, tactics, and KPIs, aligned with budgeting and resource allocation, and implemented with the full engagement of the Board of Trustees. (CFR 4.6)
3. Manifesting its inclusion plan through the development of its inclusion council, resourcing the Building Inclusion Collaborative, and partnering with HBCU's and the Navajo Nation, while exploring new programs designed to serve Latinx and African-American communities. (CFR 1.4)
4. A faculty culture committed to relational pedagogy, rigorous academic inquiry, and social justice. (CFR 2.8)
5. Establishing a strong foundation for the pursuit of external funding opportunities to diversify revenue sources while advancing institutional reputation, building partnerships, and supporting faculty scholarship. (CFR 3.4)
6. Identifying and prioritizing the critical personnel required to support the institution's plans for growth. (CFR 3.1)

Recommendations. The team has identified the following three recommendations to focus Fielding's ongoing and future efforts:

1. Monitor revenue and expenses in light of the ambitious nature of the program expansion plan and the resulting financial deficits. Establish and execute appropriate financial contingency plans, in case projected enrollments are not achieved. (CFRs 3.4, 4.6)

2. Clarify and codify the roles of core and adjunct faculty in shared governance, with appropriate rights and responsibilities accorded to the faculty in the areas of academic policy, curriculum design, the assessment of student learning outcomes, peer review, program review, and program development. (CFRs 2.4, 2.9, 3.10)

3. Recognizing that information technology is fundamental to supporting and sustaining Fielding's unique educational enterprise, continue to make good progress on improving IT services, infrastructure, and staffing. Develop an information technology plan with input from all stakeholders designed to maximize the opportunity for meaningful student-faculty engagement and rigorous learning experiences. (CFRs 3.5, 4.6)

1 - CREDIT HOUR AND PROGRAM LENGTH REVIEW FORM

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate.)
Policy on credit hour	Is this policy easily accessible? ☒ **YES** ☐ NO
	If so, where is the policy located? http://catalog.fielding.edu/content.php?catoid=3&navoid=95#grades-and-credit
	Comments: Recommend specifying review & validation procedures, along with the party responsible for insuring compliance at Fielding.
Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour	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)? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments: Program review procedures should include specific instructions to review/validate credit hour assignments and a mechanism for reassignment of credit hour values when needed.
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? ☐ YES ☐ NO
	Comments: Courses are primarily offered online.
Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses *Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.*	How many syllabi were reviewed? Approximately 45
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? Primarily online
	What degree level(s)? ☐ AA/AS ☐ BA/BS ☒ MA ☒ Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Clinical Psychology, Media Psychology, Human Development, Infant/Child Development, Evidence-Based Coaching, Education/Leadership, and Human/Organizational Development
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments: Since courses are offered asynchronously and primarily rest on completing final products, the contact hours associated with each course is not consistent either within or among programs.
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) *Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.*	How many syllabi were reviewed? Approximately 15
	What kinds of courses? Master's Project Preparation, Independent clinical work, projective assessment & testing
	What degree level(s)? ☐ AA/AS ☐ BA/BS ☒ MA ☒ Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Evidence-based coaching, Org-devel & leadership, Clinical Psychology
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments:
Sample program information (catalog,	How many programs were reviewed? 15
	What kinds of programs were reviewed? All MA and Doctoral programs
	What degree level(s)? ☐ AA/AS ☐ BA/BS ☒ MA ☒ Doctoral

	What discipline(s)? Doctoral: human development, leadership for change, infant/childhood development, organizational development, clinical psychology, media psychology. & Master's: collaborative educational leadership, digital teaching/learning, human development, infant/childhood development, media psyc, organizational development & change,
website, or other program materials)	
	Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments: All degree and certificate programs are discoverable in the university catalog: http://catalog.fielding.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=202

Review Completed By: Elizabeth Morgan
Date: 4/12/2018

2 - MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT REVIEW FORM.

Material Reviewed	Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.
**Federal regulations	Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments: Confirmed they follow Federal regulations in a conversation with Provost Gerald Porter and Associate VP Monique Snowden.
Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments: Outcome data by program is available, showing the average time to complete a degree and total cost of the program. An example is http://www.fielding.edu/Clinical-Psychology/Student-Admissions-Outcomes-and-Other-Data.pdf The website also contains information about curriculum, which outlines the course and number of terms it requires to complete the degree. http://s16973.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Clinical-Sample-Curriculum-Sequence.pdf Tuition and fees are provided for each program based on term or units. See the attached website address: http://www.fielding.edu/how-to-apply/tuition-financial-aid/tuition-fees/ Confirmed with Provost Porter and Monique Snowden that tuition and fees are available, but also that they have not been able to easily reflect on the website the total cost to complete a degree as students vary in courses taken by semester and the number of total semesters a student will be enrolled. Viewed the explanation on the website to be too problematic to accurately indicate total cost. Seems reasonable given nature of the program and the fact there is sufficient information available for the student to calculate the amount on their own.
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? ☒ YES ☐ NO

	Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? ☐ YES ☒ NO
	Comments:
	Fielding does maintain on their website a section on "Gainful Employment," which lists the program, total costs, type of jobs its graduates are qualified for. However, this seems to be oriented towards their certificate programs only. See http://www.fielding.edu/gainfulemployment/
	Fielding maintains Student Consumer Information in accordance with Higher Education Opportunity Act. This can be found at http://www.fielding.edu/student-consumer-information/ which lists the required information.
	In Fielding's self-review of this document, they indicate that they do not provide information about the employment of their graduates, stating that "Most Fielding students are adult learnings with employment before admittance into and while enrolled in their respective programs."
	Fielding might want to engage a Search Engine Optimization firm to review their website. There are a few broken links to data and some information is hard to find. Also, it doesn't appear that data is available for all programs (i.e. PhD Clinical Psychology).

*§602.16(a)(1)(vii)

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

Review Completed By: Michael Pierce
Date: 4/12/2018

3 - STUDENT COMPLAINTS REVIEW FORM.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Policy on student complaints	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	If so, is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Is so, where? http://catalog.fielding.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=176#student-complaints-and-grievances
	Comments:
Process(es)/ procedure	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	If so, please describe briefly:
	Formal and informal processes exist to route complaints by category to the appropriate university official/committee. Informal routes are pursued first, then formal mechanisms are available to resolve grievances.

	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments:
Records	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? ☒ YES ☐ NO If so, where? Records are kept in the appropriate university official's records and in the student's record, if appropriate. The team reviewed the log of student complaints recorded between 2014-2018
	Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? ☒ YES ☐ NO If so, please describe briefly: The student complaint log presented in the team room indicated that complaints are recorded by date, the official recording the complaint, the nature of the complaint, the status of the complaint as formal or informal, the resolution to the complaint, and the parties involved.
	Comments: Documentation presented reflects that the institution complies with this federal requirement.

*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)

Review Completed By: Elizabeth Morgan
Date: 4/12/2018

4 – TRANSFER CREDIT POLICY REVIEW FORM.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Transfer Credit Policy(s)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	If so, is the policy publically available? ☒ YES ☐ NO If so, where? http://www.fielding.edu/how-to-apply/transferring-credit/
	Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? ☒ YES ☐ NO
	Comments:

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

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

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

Review Completed By: Elizabeth Morgan
Date: 4/12/2018