

Dharma Realm Buddhist University
Presidential Review Report

Evaluation of President Susan Rounds

Prepared by the Faculty and Trustee Presidential Review Committees
Spring 2017

INTRODUCTION

Background for the report

Dharma Realm Buddhist University (DRBU) was founded in 1976 by Dharma Realm Buddhist Association (DRBA). From 1977 to 1984, DRBU operated with the authorization status granted by the California Postsecondary Education Commission. Since 1984, DRBU has maintained State of California Approval to operate its degree programs.

In 2010, DRBU undertook a self-study to reexamine its objectives and develop a roadmap to realize its long-term educational vision. The self-study resulted in the creation of two new degree programs (BA in Liberal Arts and MA in Buddhist Classics) and the decision to pursue regional accreditation with WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC).

The California Bureau of Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE) approved the addition of these new programs in May 2013. In January 2017, the Bureau renewed its Approval to Operate through January 2022. DRBU began sunsetting its six existing BPPE-approved degree programs in 2013, an undertaking completed in June 2015. In December 2013, DRBU was granted eligibility to pursue WSCUC Candidacy and Initial Accreditation by the WSCUC Eligibility Review Committee (ERC) based on the two new programs. The MA in Buddhist Classics was launched in Fall 2013 and the BA in Liberal Arts in Fall 2014.

Preparation and planning for the launch of the two new programs included revising the Faculty Governance Manual and the Bylaws for the Board of Trustees. These revised documents include the process for conducting a review of the President of the University. Due to the focus on preparations for applying for WSCUC Initial Accreditation, the Board of Trustees has conducted the first review of President Susan Rounds in the 2016-2017 academic year.

The timing of this review was prompted by a recommendation from WSCUC. After WSCUC's March 2016 site visit and review of DRBU's Institutional Report, DRBU was granted Candidacy for Initial Accreditation. In their action letter, the Commission wrote, "While DRBU has started to develop a process for review of the President, the process needs to be fully articulated and appropriately shared."

Background of the President

In September 2014, the Board of Trustees approved a nomination from the Trustee and Faculty Presidential Nomination Committees and appointed Dr. Susan Rounds as DRBU's next president. Dr. Rounds previously served on the teaching faculty of Dominican University as a professor and as the director of Dominican's Ukiah Campus Credential Programs. Prior to being appointed president, Dr. Rounds served as an adviser on DRBU's Accreditation Steering Committee and worked with the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) to prepare materials for DRBU's eligibility application. The appointment proceedings for Dr. Rounds followed the process outlined in Article 3 of the DRBU Bylaws.

According to the DRBU Bylaws (Article 3, Section 4), the following is the general outline of the president's responsibilities, and the review process was aimed at discerning the president's performance in fulfilling her them:

Subject to the oversight of the Board of Trustees and such supervisory powers as may be given by the Board of Trustees to the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, the President shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the University and shall have general supervision, control, and direction of the affairs, the Faculty, the administration, and education policies of the University.

REVIEW PROCESS AND PROCEDURES

Organization

The DRBU Bylaws list the powers and duties of the members of the Board in Article 2, Section 3. One of the responsibilities of the Board is to review the President's performance. This responsibility is delegated to a committee of the Board of Trustees, as outlined in Article 3, Section 7. The Presidential Review Committee, appointed by the Chairperson of the Board, is to consist of five members who are not also members of the faculty of the University. The Bylaws also state that the committee is to review the President in consultation with a Faculty Review Committee appointed by the Faculty Instruction Committee.

Because the President is ultimately accountable to the Board, yet is also a member of the Faculty of the University, the review of the President's performance is a collaborative process conducted jointly by the Trustee and the Faculty Presidential Review Committees. The Faculty committee performs the review and presents its findings to the Trustee committee, who then makes a report to the entire Board. This procedure is outlined in Section 6.a of the Faculty Governance Manual:

(iv) When the Board of Trustees initiates a review of the President by establishing a Trustees Presidential Review Committee, the Instruction Committee shall appoint a Faculty Presidential Review Committee comprising five members of the Faculty, of which one shall be a member of the Administrative Faculty, to perform the review of the President. This Faculty Presidential Review Committee shall report its findings to the Trustees Presidential Review Committee for it to make a report to the Board of Trustees as a whole. In the case that the Board of Trustees initiates the review to consider the President's reappointment, the Faculty Presidential Review Committee shall also make a recommendation to its Trustee counterpart committee on whether the President shall be reappointed.

Participation

Members of the Trustee Presidential Review Committee: Cynthia Chang, Ron Epstein, Shiue Fujjiing, Terri Nicholson, and Carol Ruth Silver (Chair).

Members of the Faculty Presidential Review Committee: Bhikshuni Jin Jr, Wayne Chen, Doug Powers (Chair), Jessica Samuels, and Ernest Waugh.

Evaluation process

The Chair of the DRBU Board of Trustees appointed a Trustee Presidential Review Committee of five members in January 2016, in accordance with Article 3, Section 7 of the DRBU Bylaws. As prescribed by the Bylaws, none of the committee members were also part of the Faculty of the University. In May 2016, the Faculty Instruction Committee appointed a Faculty Presidential Review Committee of five members, one of which was a non-teaching Faculty, in accordance with Section 6.a of the DRBU Faculty Governance Manual.

On September 20, 2016, the Chairs of both review committees met to discuss the logistics of carrying out the review, as well as review criteria and instruments. The Faculty Presidential Review Committee proceeded to develop Presidential review materials to propose for adoption, with the support of the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO). In October 2016, the Trustee and Faculty Presidential Review Committees adopted the following three documents: Presidential Review Survey Questions, Self-Assessment Form for the President, and the Presidential Review Report Template. The vote to adopt these materials was unanimous.

The Faculty Review Committee met on November 1, 2016, to confirm the timeline for the review, including collection and analysis of evidence and performing the evaluation based on the evidence.

The Presidential Review Survey was distributed on November 21, 2016, and submissions were received through December 10. The President's Self-Assessment Form was sent to President Rounds on November 16, 2016, and completed and returned on November 28.

The Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) and his assistant provided staff support to the Faculty Presidential Review Committee in carrying out the review process.

Instrument

The Presidential Review Survey was designed in three sections corresponding to the priorities outlined in DRBU's 2018 Strategic Plan: Vision and Mission; Effectiveness; and Financial Sustainability. Each section contained several specific statements regarding the President's performance for the respondent to rate, from "Almost always true" to "Almost never true," with an option for "Don't know or n/a." This made it possible to distribute the same survey to all constituents: faculty, staff, students, trustees, and alumni. Each section also contained a comment box for the respondent to leave qualitative feedback. The survey concluded with an opportunity to write in summative remarks of commendation and recommendation.

The self-assessment form asked the President to evaluate her performance in general and in relation to the items in the 2018 Strategic Plan. Both the survey and the self-assessment form can be found as attachments.

RESULTS: SURVEY AND SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM

President's Self-assessment Form

Please refer to [Attachment 1](#) for the President's self-assessment.

Categories of Survey

[Attachment 2](#) is a report of the aggregated survey responses. An excel spreadsheet of the raw data is available in [Attachment 3](#).

The survey is organized into the following categories:

- Vision & Mission
 - Commitment to University mission and vision
 - Long-term vision and planning
 - Leadership
- Effectiveness
 - Board Relations
 - Administrative/Managerial skill and ability
 - Communication skill and ability
 - Professional/Academic knowledge and skill
- Financial sustainability
 - Fiscal management
 - Development

Affiliations of Survey Respondents

Faculty: 19

Staff: 16

Student: 12

Trustee: 7¹

Alumnus/Alumna: 5

Total respondents: 46

Note: The number of respondents in each category does not add up to 46 because nine respondents reported more than one affiliation with the University.

¹ After the completion of the report and data analysis, 4 additional surveys were submitted by Trustees, making a total of 11. The results of these surveys are not reflected in the body of this report.

Summary of comments

A document of the complete comments is available as [Attachment 4](#).

Commendations

Comments spoke very highly of the President's dedication to the mission and vision of DRBU. Dr. Rounds is in a good position to support the mission and vision, as she has a "deep understanding acquired over time and direct experience going back to the Founder's establishment of the school and involvement in its formative years." One respondent noted that "her presence and leadership adds a great deal in helping DRBU move forward" toward its vision with "clarity and purpose."

Several respondents also commended Dr. Rounds' effectiveness in planning. The President "works closely" with DRBU leadership "to come up with a solid and coherent plan for the future." One respondent noted some specific achievements that demonstrate her effectiveness in this area: "During the short time as president, Dr. Rounds led DRBU in achieving many significant near-team milestones including WASC candidacy, Building 123, shaping the new MA and BA programs, developing faculty and staff, etc."

Many respondents commended Dr. Rounds' skill in leadership and administration. The president "leads by example" and has demonstrated exceptional judgement in solving various problems that arise at the University. One respondent noted that "the President very quickly analyzes and responds to situations as they arise. She is an excellent problem solver, strategist, and genuinely cares about the welfare of the students, faculty, staff and the wider community." Others found that she is open to suggestions, delegates authority skillfully, and "excels in leading the community and in encouraging productive dialogue and problem solving." Multiple respondents commented that she is a good fit for the University, either in general or during this phase of its growth. For example, one respondent wrote that "her background and cultural competency are particularly suited to this university."

Also contributing to the positive perception of the President's leadership is her character. Many respondents praised her character as a leader, calling her "tactful, open hearted, strong," "pragmatic," and "nurturing." She is perceived as both "personable and professional," with an "optimistic yet practical attitude." One respondent noted that she "has done an exceptional job of building and sustaining morale"; another that she "embodies the values of integrity, responsibility and sensitivity." Several respondents also noted her sense of humor as an asset to her leadership.

Some respondents commended Dr. Rounds' communication and her fostering of a supportive environment. Two noted her "excellent communication skills." She has an excellent understanding of the larger community and "skillfulness in working in this multi-cultural and complex community." Respondents also wrote that she "genuinely cares about the welfare of

the students, faculty, staff, and the wider community” and is a “positive presence on campus and supportive of faculty, staff, and students.”

One Board member noted that the President comes to Board meetings prepared and sends a report beforehand. “Dr. Rounds actively interacts with the board. She listens carefully to their comments and suggestions” and “keeps them informed.”

The following comment touches on many of the qualities of Dr. Rounds that the community commended: “This President has excellent communications skills and abilities at problem solving and resolving tensions. She is highly regarded by all, both in the DRBU community and the larger local community. Her character and passion for education and the mission of DRBU is unimpeachable. The knowledge and experience of her educational background and experience in education management qualifies her well for this job.”

Recommendations

The majority of recommendations given by survey respondents were in the area of communication, calling for increased communication with the wider DRBU community. One respondent suggested that the President “should continue to expand systems that make sure that everyone feels heard at appropriate times and that everyone is valued for their contributions”; another suggested that she “facilitate more communication channels throughout the University horizontally and vertically.” A few comments requested that the President communicate more with the wider DRBU community rather than staying connected with and relying on only a few individuals.

Some specific recommendations for increasing institution-wide communication include 1) more school-wide “two-way communication meetings,” such as a monthly all hands meeting or town hall meeting, for the President to “communicate the university’s short term and long term goals and action plans” and for community members to ask questions and voice their concerns on a regular basis without a strict agenda; 2) individual meetings with Faculty each semester “to hear their concerns and suggestions”; 3) sharing more meeting minutes and “noting that specific concerns that have been raised by specific groups or individuals have been heard and how they were addressed”; 4) encouraging conversations and collaboration across departments; 5) equal accessibility and transparency regarding information and resources of the school. For example, one participant wrote, “The President could do more to ensure that all faculty and staff have access to the same information, including budgets and available funding for faculty development.” Another noted that “it is not clear if all faculty members have access to the same information or if some faculty members are privileged to know more than others because of the roles they play or the access they have to administrators,” noting a reliance on certain individuals for information, “which provides consistency, but also causes an information gap”; and 6) increased communication with the Board. One Board member wrote, “We need more reports such as personnel and others in order for the board to gain a better understanding of the DRBU operation and plan moving forward. With only 2 or 3 meetings a year, more communication from the president to the board throughout the year will be needed.”

Other recommendations for improvement related to public relations and development. One respondent highlighted that “development is an area that requires much more focused time and attention from the President and the entire DRBU leadership team in order to flourish.” Two others noted a need for increased attention to public relations, writing that the President “could be more assertive in coordinating events or collaborations with local community organizations” and that “while she has done a magnificent job of fostering growth and development within DRBU, the President must also begin to create awareness of the University among the broader community and among prospective donors. The president could be more assertive in coordinating events or collaborations with local community organizations.”

This comment from one of the Faculty members sums up the comments well: “She has been an excellent President at this stage of our growth when we have many needs and rely on her as an experienced administrator. There are a few areas where it would be good to have even greater visibility, communication, and coordination.”

EVALUATION AGAINST CRITERIA

Vision & Mission

Dr. Rounds began her involvement with DRBU in the early 1980s when the University was first seeking approval to operate from the state of California, and through the last four decades has served the University in different capacities. Dr. Rounds became part of DRBU’s 2010-2013 self-study that led to the creation of DRBU’s two new programs and application to WSCUC to become eligible to apply for initial accreditation. One of the main tasks of the self-study was the clarification of the mission and vision of the University. Another accomplishment of the self-study that Dr. Rounds participated in was the drafting of a five-year strategic plan for the University.

Since becoming president in 2014, Dr. Rounds has provided leadership in the governance and administration of DRBU in ways that are consistent with DRBU’s mission, vision, and strategic priorities stated in the strategic plan. Dr. Rounds has also been active in DRBU’s program review process, which is an important component in informing the next cycle of strategic planning. In President Rounds’ self-assessment, she sees herself as “a good leader” and feels that she is “effective in supporting and communicating the university’s mission and goals.”

The community views Dr. Rounds’ performance positively in this area. Ninety-four percent of the survey respondents agree that she communicates and promotes the vision, mission, and values of DRBU in a manner that encourages others to become dedicated to the present and future success of DRBU and its strategic plan. Many community members seem also to view Dr. Rounds’ leadership style and skills favorably. The following table contains the survey results in the area of leadership:

Statement: The president...	Positive	Negative	Don't know/NA
...consistently acts in a way that promotes effective working relationships.	75	4	9
...motivates others by exhibiting enthusiasm.	91	4	0
...adheres consistently to fundamental values like honesty, integrity, fairness, and inclusiveness.	86	2	4
...demands high standards through clearly stated expectations and personal conduct.	78	4	11
...uses good judgment and responds to situations appropriately, including taking sensible risks.	79	0	15
...works hard to address problems forthrightly and solve them productively.	85	0	13
...fosters an environment on campus in which all people feel genuinely included, no matter what their race, ethnicity, national origin, disability, gender, or sexual orientation.	83	2	11
...delegates authority and responsibilities appropriately.	68	2	26
...has the appropriate authority necessary to carry out his or her responsibilities.	72	2	24
...has the appropriate support necessary to carry out his or her responsibilities.	63	0	26
...demonstrates leadership in implementing policy regarding health, welfare, and non-curricular programming.	57	6	28
...demonstrates leadership in offering student services which foster cultural growth and leadership potential.	61	9	24
...demonstrates leadership in establishing a campus atmosphere that provides for the development of the individual in a supportive environment.	77	2	15
...puts students first and wants students to succeed.	85	0	11

Only three aspects of Dr. Rounds' leadership received an affirmative response from less than 66% (2/3) of the respondents (see highlighted row in the table above). Looking more closely, 24% to 28% of respondents selected "don't know" for these four areas. Therefore, Dr. Rounds may have room to improve on her overall good performance in these areas, or may need to make her work in these areas better known to the DRBU community.

An example of something Dr. Rounds has done in her position of leadership is institute a collaborative agenda-making process for Faculty meetings, at the request of several Faculty members. This has improved meeting efficiency and inclusivity, but is still an area in need of improvement. She wrote in her self-assessment, "Although this process has not been without

flaws, I think it has helped people feel more included in governance. We still have work to do in this area.”

A strength of Dr. Rounds’ leadership is her attention to the well-being of Faculty and staff: “I have worked to provide supportive and calming counsel to individuals under stress, and also to maintain a sense of humor about the various predicaments that develop.” Many of the survey respondents wrote comments in praise of Dr. Rounds’ character, citing, for example, her personable yet professional demeanor, strength, kindness, and sense of humor.

Another piece of evidence in support of President Rounds’ leadership ability is the WSCUC Review Team’s commendation of DRBU’s visit preparation:

DRBU engaged the entire university community—faculty, students, staff, administrators, and trustees—in preparations for the visit, and everyone responded graciously and openly to the team’s questions and requests before and throughout their time on campus. (WSCUC Action Letter)

Effectiveness

President Rounds stated in her self-assessment that she has a good working relationship with the Board. Trustees seem to agree with her assessment: all respondents who are Trustees rated the President highly in areas regarding Board relations, such as “The president keeps lines of communication between the President and Board members open and clear,” “works cooperatively with Board members,” and “keeps Board members informed on state of affairs of the University.” Respondents who are not Board members either agreed with these statements or indicated that they do not know.

In the area of administrative/managerial skill and ability, President Rounds is also strong. She had experience in administration before becoming President of DRBU, when she served as the director of Dominican University’s teaching credential program in DU’s satellite campus in Ukiah. At DRBU, one of President Rounds’ first initiatives was to clarify the roles and responsibilities of administrators and staff and to improve the transparency of the decision-making process. Survey responses in this category were overwhelmingly affirmative of her administrative and managerial skill, with no more than 4% disagreeing with any one statement. Most notably, 83% of respondents agree that President Rounds creates a climate of respect and high morale.² In her self-assessment, President Rounds noted that she is “mindful of communicating appreciation, validation, reassurance, and encouragement to the people I work with.”

² See [Attachment 2](#).

Statement: The president...	Positive	Negative	Don't know/NA
...recommends to the Board the hiring of individuals whose abilities are well suited to their positions.	41	2	52
...promotes and supports recruitment of a diverse and qualified staff and faculty.	63	0	33
...promotes and supports staff and faculty development.	70	2	22
...effectively structures, sets priorities for, delegates, and facilitates the accomplishment of tasks.	65	2	26
...demonstrates tenacity and singleness of purpose when necessary, but also adapts to and promotes change when appropriate.	74	2	20
...works well under pressure, responds well to crisis, and has a high tolerance for ambiguity.	71	2	22
...maintains a professional and cooperative attitude when working with groups and builds consensus, trust, and confidence among the people he or she works with closely.	76	2	20
...provides for broad participation and collaboration in planning and decision-making.	69	2	22
...gives firm direction when needed, is tactful in conveying criticism, and addresses conflicts constructively.	78	2	15
...consults with appropriate individuals before making decisions.	65	0	30
...gathers information needed for sound decision making.	63	2	33
...makes sound decisions in a timely manner.	66	2	28
...recognizes and awards faculty and staff's outstanding accomplishments.	67	4	20
...creates a climate of respect and high morale.	83	4	11
...is accessible to faculty and staff.	79	4	13
...arranges/manages resources to facilitate the accomplishment of work.	62	2	30
...sets priorities for action.	66	2	26
...communicates performance expectations clearly.	61	4	30
...provides feedback to subordinates.	59	4	33
...evaluates staff effectively and fairly.	58	2	37

Dr. Rounds wrote that though she finds her administrative skills to be strong, she has sometimes tried to move too quickly to implement changes at DRBU, giving the example of the Spring 2015 pilot faculty evaluation. She expressed that she is “learning to negotiate a balance between the desire to be efficient and productive with the need to be inclusive and collaborative in making decisions.”

In the survey questions, Dr. Rounds also was evaluated positively in the area of communication skill and ability. For example, 79% of survey respondents agree that the President “regularly exhibits the ability to inform and persuade others in oral and written communication”; 80% agree that she “effectively articulates and conveys needs and goals to others”; and 89% agree that she “listens well and is receptive to the ideas of others.” All of the statements in this category received similar responses. In her self-assessment, Dr. Rounds wrote that she has “excellent communication skills” and cited an example of action she has taken in this area, namely instituting and writing a DRBU newsletter. Dr. Rounds also pointed out in her survey that she meets regularly with many DRBU administrators: the Dean of Students, the Faculty Liaison to the Campus Life Team, the Dean of Academics, the Vice President for Finance and Administration, the Director of Finance, and the Director of Development and Strategic Planning. She also attends weekly meetings of the Office of Academic Affairs.

While some (19) of the comments given by survey respondents also praised her communication skills, nearly as many (18) expressed concern in this area. Some felt that the President communicates primarily with only a few individuals and that more communication with all members of the community is needed. Others wrote that organizational communication overall needs continued improvement and that communication channels at DRBU need to be opened up both horizontally and vertically.

Dr. Rounds’ previous work in higher education has equipped her well with professional and academic knowledge and skill. In her previous role, she gained knowledge about assessment, “including experience working with program learning standards, and outcome based assessment,” as stated in her self-assessment. Her skills as the sole administrator of an off-campus program have also been beneficial to her work at DRBU. The community sees Dr. Rounds as strong in this area, as well. Ninety-one percent of survey respondents agree that she manifests an understanding of DRBU’s goals, policies, and procedures, etc. Seventy-six percent think she contributes to developing and enhancing the academic quality of the University (15% felt they did not know).

Statement: The president...	Positive response	Negative response	Don’t know/NA
...provides effective institutional representation in community relations.	69	2	24
...effectively interacts with community organizations in a leadership capacity as appropriate.	67	4	26

...represents the University well.	81	2	15
...communicates effectively with the University-at-large, including alumni.	65	4	26
...is visible in the communities.	75	4	17
...is perceived as a community leader.	74	4	20
...portrays a professional image of the University.	85	2	11
...encourages partnerships with the community, business, industry, and other educational institutions.	63	4	30
...is politically astute.	65	2	30
...exhibits good media presence.	65	2	26
...maintains good alumni relations.	45	0	48

Financial sustainability and management

Since 2013 when DRBU launched the new programs, began the current strategic planning cycle, and received Eligibility from the WSCUC, the University under the leadership of Dr. Akpinar and Dr. Rounds has primarily been focused on implementing the programs and the governance structure, recruiting students, and obtaining WSCUC Candidacy. Development has not been an overt emphasis for DRBU even though it is implicit in several of the strategic priorities outlined in the DRBU 2018 Strategic Plan. Nonetheless, since assuming leadership of DRBU, Dr. Rounds has overseen the raising of \$13,838,259 for sustaining operations of the University, renovating the women's dormitory and the future University building, and the purchase and renovation of the Sudhana Center (see table below).

Capital Expenditure ³	\$9,190,000
DRBA Grant 2015-17 ⁴	\$1,609,828
Donation 2015-17 ⁵	\$1,231,725
Endowment Fund Donation	\$1,000,000
Sudhana Center Budget 2015-17 ⁶	\$806,706
Total	\$13,838,259

³ University Building South Wing renovation, \$5.4 million; Sudhana Center campus purchase, \$3.2 million; Women's Dormitory Phase 1: \$590,000.

⁴ \$860,533 for 2016-17 and \$749,295 for 2015-16.

⁵ \$629,160 (projected) for 2016-17 and \$602,565 for 2015-16.

⁶ \$193,600 in 2017; \$255,850 in 2016; \$357,256 in 2015 (including capital expenditure).

Given the progress that DRBU has made and will continue to make in accreditation, the University has entered into a period of systematic and sustained enrollment growth. This welcomed and necessary growth requires a substantial and carefully planned and coordinated development effort. Dr. Rounds has begun the initiative by working with the Board of Trustees to put forth a 10-year \$30 million capital campaign. Moving forward, it is vital that Dr. Rounds vigorously oversees and carries out the campaign to ensure the long-term financial health and sustainability of the University.

Under her leadership, the management of finances has been successful. Dr. Rounds has worked closely with the Director of Strategic Planning and the Director of Finance to monitor the budget. Ongoing work includes facilitating the systematization of yearly budget preparation. The WSCUC team commended DRBU's in the area of financial management.⁷

Many of the DRBU community members are not in a position to be able to evaluate the President's performance in fiscal management. Of the survey respondents who felt able to answer questions in this category, they rated Dr. Rounds very positively. For example, of the respondents who chose to rate her implementation of procedures based on audit recommendations, 100% answered that they find her effective in this area; of those who rated her management of the University budget, 100% answered that she does so effectively.

EVALUATION: Has the President sufficiently advanced DRBU's strategic priorities?

Obtain WASC candidacy

The strategic plan put forward the goal to achieve Candidacy with WASC by 2018. Having achieved Candidacy status in 2016, DRBU is ahead of schedule on this goal. The WSCUC Review Team commended DRBU for its well written institutional report, its engagement of the entire community in preparation for and participation in the site visit, the establishment of "a reliable financial reporting system and a budgeting process that monitors actual revenue and expenditures" and "enable[s] DRBU to stay on a successful financial track," the University's "ethic of care that is grounded in the university's mission and values and is captured in the institutional learning outcomes," and the "development and ongoing support of a community that is remarkably engaged in old and new ideas, consistently open to fresh perspectives, and creative in advancing the university's mission on and off the campus."

The WASC Commission found DRBU to be substantially compliant with all of its standards and Criteria for Review, except for three areas: presidential review process; conducting a program review; and developing faculty evaluation processes and procedures.

⁷ "The team commends DRBU for establishing a reliable financial reporting system as well as developing a budgeting process that monitors actual revenue and expenditures. These systems and processes enable DRBU to stay on a successful financial track" (WSCUC Action Letter).

Immediately after the commission's decision, it scheduled a second visit to review these three areas in November 2017. After this visit, DRBU hopes to achieve Initial Accreditation status.

Implement academic programs

DRBU has also accomplished this goal of the strategic plan. Both the BA and MA programs have been up and running since Fall 2013. DRBU has a sufficient number of qualified Teaching Faculty to maintain the programs. In the 2016-17 academic year, DRBU is conducting a program review (at the recommendation of WSCUC) to review the MA program's performance. The BA program will be reviewed once it has graduated cohorts.

Recruit and retain the initial cohorts of students

Recruitment of students is one area that needs additional measures to bring enrollment numbers closer to the target. While cohorts are intentionally kept small in a commitment to DRBU's pedagogical model, the number of students has fallen short of enrollment projections. DRBU has achieved the goal stated in the 2018 Strategic Plan to "recruit and enroll at least one undergraduate and one graduate cohort per year" for the first four years. Even so, enrollment numbers have remained low and it is evident that DRBU will not begin recruiting two cohorts per program beginning in its fifth year, as projected in the Strategic Plan.

In retaining students, however, DRBU has been performing well. In the MA program, 5 of 6 students in the first cohort persisted to their second year, 4 of which graduated; of 6 students initially enrolled in the second cohort, 100% persisted to graduation; and in the third cohort, 10 of the original 11 students who matriculated are expected to graduate in May 2017. In the BA program, only one of the matriculated students has withdrawn from the program thus far. The first BA cohort is in its sophomore year.

Develop buildings and infrastructure of our university campus

In 2015, renovation of the first phase of the women's dormitory was completed. In 2015, the Sudhana Center was purchased as a place for classes, activities, and housing. Work on the south wing of the future DRBU building is ongoing and completion of the first phase is projected for May 2017. Some renovation and improvement of facilities at the Sudhana Center is planned for an expansion of the men's dormitory.

Housing on campus has reached capacity for both male and female students. Fundraising development is currently a priority, to be able to renovate further living spaces for students. Another wing of the women's dorm and the Sudhana Center will need renovation in order to accommodate incoming students. It is worth reiterating that DRBU has entered a period where the University, from the President and the Board of Trustees down, needs to devote substantial resources and efforts in development.

CONCLUSION

Findings

Against the responsibilities outlined in the DRBU Bylaws and the four strategic priorities in the DRBU 2018 DRBU Strategic Plan, President Rounds' overall performance has been above satisfactory.

Dr. Rounds has a long history with the institution, as well as involvement in the 2010-13 self-study and creation of the new degree programs, which has made her well suited to carry out the mission and vision of the University. In commitment to the mission and vision, long-term planning, and leadership of the University, Dr. Rounds performs very well. In her self-assessment she indicated that she feels strong in this area; survey respondents are predominantly in agreement. Under her leadership, DRBU has achieved WASC Candidacy, acquired new property, renovated existing buildings, and implemented two new degree programs.

Even though development is not explicitly the President's responsibility according to the Bylaws⁸—the Bylaws assigns⁹ that responsibility to the Board of Trustees—in today's higher education, the practical reality is that, being the "chief executive officer" of a university, the President is equally well regarded by society as a CEO of a corporation. Consequently, the position of the President wields significant symbolic power in gaining audience with those who have the means to contribute financially to advance the mission and vision of DRBU.

Dr. Rounds recognizes the significance of development: she has overseen the raising of \$13,838,259 since assuming leadership at DRBU and put forth a 10-year \$30 million capital campaign that was approved by the Board of Trustees in January 2016. Dr. Rounds also pointed to development as an area to for her to devote significantly more efforts in the coming years. To ensure the long-term financial health and sustainability of DRBU and to facilitate the necessary enrollment and capacity growth the University has begun to experience, it is paramount that Dr. Rounds leverage the significant strategic advantage associated with the post of the president in the area of development, specifically in overseeing and carrying out the 10-year capital campaign.

Recruiting students is also an area of concern, with enrollment numbers below projections stated in the 2018 Strategic Plan in virtually every year of operation. Dr. Rounds has

⁸ "Subject to the oversight of the Board of Trustees and such supervisory powers as may be given by the Board of Trustees to the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, the President shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the University and shall have general supervision, control, and direction of the affairs, the Faculty, the administration, and education policies of the University" (DRBU Bylaws, Article 3, Section 4).

⁹ "The DRBA Board established the DRBU Board as a self-perpetuating body to govern the University according to the DRBU Bylaws, and as such the DRBU Board shall have the power to supervise, control, and manage the affairs and to determine the long-term educational policy of the University. In addition, the DRBU Board is responsible for the quality, integrity, and financial sustainability of DRBU and for ensuring the advancement of the institution's mission" (DRBU Bylaws, Article 2, Section 3).

demonstrated an awareness of this concern, writing in her self-assessment, “We have made some progress in refining our recruiting and outreach methods, but this area still needs consistent focus and attention.”

Dr. Rounds’ relations with the Board of Trustees are strong, as are her administrative and managerial skill and ability and her professional and academic knowledge and skill. Her years of experience in higher education administration have contributed to her success in these areas at DRBU. Many survey respondents also commented favorably on her communication skills, noting her respectful, professional, and optimistic character and her skill in problem-solving, though according to others there could be more effort made toward accessibility and transparency. In the area of financial management, Dr. Rounds has also demonstrated proficiency. She has presided over improvements in the organization of financial management and budget preparation and monitoring.

Based on survey responses, Dr. Rounds performs well in the area of leadership overall, but may either improve in some particular aspects or make her work in these areas better known to the DRBU community, namely in implementing policy regarding health, welfare, and non-curricular programming and in demonstrating leadership in offering student services which foster cultural growth and leadership potential.

While responses to survey questions evaluated Dr. Rounds favorably in the area of communication, many of the comments indicated that there is a need for her to improve inclusive and University-wide communication. A number of respondents felt that not everyone’s voice has an opportunity to be heard or that the President communicates primarily with only a few individuals. Dr. Rounds noted in her self-assessment that “the need to be inclusive and collaborative in making decisions” is something she is working on, balancing it with her “desire to be efficient and productive.”

Communication and improving inclusiveness are areas that Dr. Rounds has devoted efforts to since becoming the President in 2014. The challenge largely lies in a shared governance structure under which the Teaching Faculty has significant responsibilities and powers in the governance of DRBU. Therefore, though the President’s responsibilities include “direction of...the Faculty” (Bylaws), the Bylaws and the Faculty Governance Manual delegate the primary leadership and oversight of the academic programs and the Teaching Faculty to the Dean of Academics. Given that this governance is somewhat uncommon in higher education (though not among other similar institutions), there has been an expected learning curve for not just the President but also the Dean and all the Professors to adapt to.

Commendations

- President Rounds has provided steady leadership in guiding DRBU’s significant advances in its pursuit of regional accreditation. The WSCUC awarded DRBU Candidacy Status with affirmative commendations in July 2016.

- President Rounds has demonstrated strong commitment, engagement, and understanding of DRBU's mission and vision and how they have to be integral to all parts of the University's programs and operations.
- Under President Rounds' leadership, the University has secured more than \$13 million that are critically important to support DRBU's ongoing operations, add to the endowment, and renovate and purchase needed facilities.

Recommendations

- DRBU has had sufficient resources to operate and grow up to this point. However, the anticipated enrollment and capacity growth in the next five years will require substantial resources. In the coming years, development needs to be a major area of focus for the President. President Rounds should leverage the considerable strategic advantage associated with the presidency in the area of development to provide leadership in carrying out the \$30 million capital campaign.
- Despite not being accredited, DRBU has matriculated a new cohort of students for both the MA and BA programs since the two programs launched in 2013 and 2014 respectively. However, The University's recruiting efforts have not met its enrollment projection except for one MA cohort. Growth in enrollment in DRBU's programs has been and will continue to be a priority. President Rounds should provide leadership to enhance DRBU's recruiting capacity to more consistently meet the enrollment projection stated in the strategic plan.
- The DRBU Bylaws and Faculty Governance Manual outline a shared governance structure uncommon to most higher education institutions. In this model Teaching Faculty work alongside senior administrators in the governance of the University and the leadership of the Teaching Faculty is delegated to the Dean of Academics. President Rounds should continue to provide leadership in the further implementation of this model and promote understanding and familiarity with the delegation of powers and responsibilities and the decision-making mechanism among DRBU Faculty and Staff.
- While Dr. Rounds has demonstrated strength in some areas of communication, the committees have some specific suggestions for improvement in others:
 - To increase University-wide communication, the President should host an annual town hall meeting open to all members of the DRBU community.
 - To increase communication with the Board of Trustees, the President should provide an annual State of the University report to the Board at its spring meeting, to which the Board will then provide a response and feedback.

Should the President have a regular term? If so, how long?

President Rounds suggested in her self-assessment a three or four year term for the President. St. John's College does not have a regular term length; Thomas Aquinas College has a six year term. According to the American Council on Education, the national average tenure of a university president is 8.5 years. The committees recommend a five year renewable term for the President of DRBU.

How often should the President be reviewed?

According to the DRBU Bylaws, the Board of Trustees can review the performance of the President at any time. The recommendation here is aimed at establishing a reasonable practice to regularly review the President's performance. In her self-assessment, President Rounds suggested that "if the term is three or four years, then evaluation should occur once during that term, in the last semester of the term." At Thomas Aquinas College, if the Chairman of the Board deems the president worthy of another term, the president is reviewed in the final (sixth) year of his or her current term.

If the President intends to continue his or her service beyond the current term, the Bylaws stipulate that a comprehensive review be carried out to determine whether the Board should appoint the President for another term. The committees suggest that this comprehensive review be carried out in the penultimate year of the President's current term (typically, this will be in the fourth year of a five-year term).

For more regular and less comprehensive interaction and feedback between the President and the Board, the committees suggest an annual State of the University report by the President and response by the Board, as seen in the fourth recommendation.

Areas of improvement for the Review Process

Presidential Review Survey

The survey was too long. Survey statistics show that, on average, it took the respondents 55 minutes to complete the survey. This could be improved by reducing the number of items (88 questions) and number of options for the multiple choice items (7 options). By selecting fewer items of good quality and a more appropriate and user-friendly number of multiple choice options, the experience of respondents will be improved, thus the quality of the information collected will be improved, as well.

The platform used to implement the survey and collect data was Typeform. The report and data it generated automatically were not intuitive or helpful to the committee in making assessments or conducting further analysis. The committees plan to test other platforms for future surveys.

Self-assessment Instrument for the President

The self-assessment form provided the committees with very useful information to assist in the evaluation of the President. However, there is also room for improvement in the design of the form. The questions in Section 1 could be incorporated into Section 3, reducing the length of the form to a core group of relevant questions. As it was administered, the form had some overlap in the questions of different sections. It was most likely for this reason that Dr. Rounds gave more thorough answers to the questions in Section 1 than in Section 3. The template could be shortened to cover all relevant information without redundancy.

[Attachment 5](#) contains the current self-assessment template used for this review and an example of a revised version of the self-assessment form.