

# Attachment 3.8 Self-study report from Co-curricular Programs and Activities

Program Review Report  
Dharma Realm Buddhist University  
Master of Arts in Buddhist Classics  
Prepared by the Program Review Committee  
April 1, 2017

## INTRODUCTION/CONTEXT

In this report, the program review committee is assessing co-curricular programs, which have been operative for almost two years. DRBU began organizing co-curricular programs and activities in Fall 2015. The Faculty appointed two professors and four campus life staff members to the Committee on Co-Curricular Activities in August 2015. Combining human resources from Academic and Campus Life departments, the committee set up a process to review and approve co-curricular program or activity proposals; to integrate student learning outcomes in their designs, and to carry out learning outcome assessments on co-curricular programs and activities; and to develop and solicit ideas from the DRBU community on the type of programs and activities that are aligned with its academic goals and programs and also support the personal and professional development of all students.

The mission of the co-curricular committee supports the overall mission of the university to convey knowledge and activate the intrinsic wisdom possessed by all individuals. Specifically, the mission of this committee states: "Co-Curricular events extend learning outside the classroom, complementing DRBU's academic programs with activities in contemporary issues and scholarship. These activities aim to build community and raise awareness of global issues in ethics, politics, spirituality, culture, and the environment, with a goal to inspire and broaden discussions around DRBU's academic programs. The juxtaposition of the classical texts and the co-curricular activities mutually illuminate the curriculum and these contemporary issues."

As stated in the mission statement, the co-curricular programs aim to supplement what students learn in class through lectures by experts in fields related to the various strands and other academically-oriented events. As will be shown below, the programs have proven to be effective insofar as they contribute to student learning in the curriculum, improve ethical awareness, apply learning to modern life, and develop tools for further study. The programs bring the community together and initiate discussions about issues salient to their studies and applicable to their personal life.

In short, the co-curricular committee has organized a series of fifteen events (nineteen if the individual events of the environmental series are counted). The committee has been awarded a designated budget to carry out their programs, which has increased to make possible new programming. The team has fine-tuned their assessment mechanism to respond to evidence collected from students. In addition to hosting interfaith and practice-oriented talks in response to student feedback from surveys, the committee has added a BA PLO 2 ("Cultivate a flexibility of mind to adapt to changing conditions") to the list of program learning outcomes targeted by the co-curricular programs. The committee has also modified the days and times of its events in response to direct and indirect feedback.

## PROGRAM QUALITY

### Students

Co-curricular programs are integrated with the academic programs and designed to support all students' personal and professional development. DRBU's co-curricular activities encourage connecting the study of classical texts with contemporary issues and applications in the modern world. The committee has responded to a diversifying student body and attempted to facilitate events that engage different interests among the student population. For example, Clare Ronzani gave an inspiring lecture on "Thomas Merton and Contemplation," which related to the BA students reading the Bible in Western Classics. DRBU's two Catholic undergraduate students had dinner with the speaker and their Western Classics professor. The Guqin concert complimented the Chinese Classics strand, which had previously not been spotlighted by any co-curricular programs. An upcoming lecture will focus on Western and Eastern liturgies, tying into the BA Music Strand for the first time in a co-curricular event.

Even though the committee attempts to serve all students, some events focus on areas in the BA curriculum that are not shared in the MA curriculum. Given that the MA curriculum is more focused on Buddhism, not all co-curricular events pertain to the MA reading list. Still on the list of priorities for future programs, the committee plans to host a lecture on modern philosophy to compliment the Comparative Hermeneutics Strand in the MA program. A step toward this goal, the DRBU 2017 graduation speaker will be philosopher Jacob Needleman. In time, the committee plans to host events that represent all aspects of the integrated curriculum as well as, to the extent possible given the available resources, student interests.

### **Program, Activities, and Services**

The co-curricular programs target three program learning outcomes from the BA program and three from the MA program. The BA PLOs include: PLO 1 (demonstrate ethical awareness), PLO 5 (appreciate and defend different systems of thought as conveyed within the primary texts in the curriculum), and PLO 6 (Demonstrate fluency in the use of tools and methods of inquiry from different traditions and disciplines presented in the curriculum). The MA PLOs include: PLO 1 (exercise ethical sensibility), PLO 2 (assess and articulate major Buddhist methods and practices), and PLO 3 (explain insights gained from close reading of texts and their implications for the personal, the social, and the natural worlds). The programs to date have addressed each of these PLOs at least four times. Anyone in DRBU who wishes to propose a co-curricular program or activity submits an online submission form that identifies the applicable learning outcome(s). In this way, identifying and strengthening the program learning outcomes are built into the process of organizing co-curricular events.

DRBU's measures effectiveness for co-curricular events through post-activity surveys, alignment with program learning outcomes, attendance, informal conversations, and committee reflections. The institution assesses the effectiveness of its co-curricular programs and, after collecting data from survey evaluations, improves future programs to better respond to student needs and interests. A student survey was designed in 2015 and has since been distributed to all DRBU students in attendance at every co-curricular event. Since the survey was introduced, surveys for eleven events have been collected, used for assessment, and archived.

This year, an attempt was made to count the number of students who attended co-curricular events. Student attendance ranged from 9 to 26 students, or in other words, attendance rates ranged between twenty-three and seventy-four percent of DRBU students. The committee is still developing a set parameter concerning what percentage of student attendance determines whether an event is successful. Not surprisingly, the most students attended an event hosted on campus during the middle of the day when no other classes were held. In addition to the number of students who attend, other

faculty, staff, and members of the local community also attend the co-curricular events. The total audience size almost always surpasses the estimated attendance.

Table of Student Attendance (not the total attendance):

Event	Semester	Date	Survey Count	Attendance Count
Introduction to the Vedas	Fall	9/14/2016	14	14
Civic Engagement for Humanity	Fall	9/20/2016	8	
Harmonious Relationship	Fall	11/14/2016	9	12
Guqin: Music of Ancient Chinese Scholars	Spring	2/6/2017	7	9
Clare Ronzani	Spring	3/6/2017	20	23
Bhikkhu Bodhi	Spring	3/7/2017	19	26
Teach Me to Be Wild	Spring	3/27/2017	4	12

In addition to surveys and attendance, the committee meets to review all events as a group and suggest changes for the future. The results of the survey as well as the committee's responses to the feedback will be discussed in detail below.

The following is a list of co-curricular events hosted from (when the committee was formed in) fall 2015 to spring 2017.

#### Fall 2015

Dr. Srikant Bahulkar, "Buddhist Narrative Literature"  
 Rev. Heng Sure and Ven. Ming Hai, "Chinese Chan and Western Zen"  
*Century of the Self* screening and discussion

#### Spring 2016

Ethics and the Environment (five week forum)  
 Dr. Osmund Bopearachchi, "The Life of Gotama Buddha as Depicted in Ancient Indian Art"  
 Dr. Snjezana Akpinar, "What is Doxography?"  
 Ajahn Pasanno, "The Interrelationship of Mettā, Vipassanā, & Samatha and their Practices"

#### Fall 2016

Dr. Ganesh Umakant Thite, "Introduction to the Vedas"  
 Carol Ruth Silver and Marion Kwan, "Civic Engagement for Humanity: Lessons from Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement Applied to Modern Times"  
 Dr. Ron Epstein, "Harmonious Relationship as Buddhist Practice"

#### Spring 2017

David Wong, "Guqin: Music of Ancient Chinese Scholars"  
 Clare Ronzani, "Thomas Merton and Meditation"  
 Bhikkhu Bodhi, question and answer session  
*Teach Me To Be Wild* screening and discussion  
 Dr. Stephen Wilcox, "Creating a Native Western Buddhist Liturgy: A Dialogue"

## Student Learning & Success

Including the upcoming lecture by Dr. Wilcox, the co-curricular committee has organized fifteen programs. The usage rate for the co-curricular programs in spring 2017 is fifty percent. The outcomes of the co-curricular programs have been evaluated mainly on the basis of direct evidence from student surveys, which ask students to respond to four questions.

- 1) Does this event complement and/or inform me of texts I am studying in the classroom?
- 2) Did this event improve my awareness of ethical issues and implications?
- 3) Does this event have practical implications in my life, community, and the world?
- 4) Did this event help me develop any tools and/or methods of inquiry?

In response to the first question about whether the event complements texts studied in class, the surveys revealed that students usually draw a connection, but in a couple of cases they did not. For those two events, it has been determined that a clear introduction that draws the relationship between the texts and the topic would have helped to clarify the connection. In spring 2016, 81% of 64 students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed to question one as compared to 77% of 31 responses in fall 2016. Only two percent disagreed in spring 2016 as compared to 1% who strongly disagreed. In spring 2016, 16% were neutral as compared to 19% in fall 2016. Regarding a specific event, almost ninety percent of students surveyed thought that Ajahn Pasanno's talk informed them of the texts they study in class. This is because all students read Pāli texts, which related to his lecture. Fifteen out of twenty students who attended the "Thomas Merton and Contemplation" lecture strongly agree that the event complemented their understanding of the texts studied in the classroom.<sup>1</sup> Given that only the BA students read Western Classics and the Bible, it makes sense that the MA students would not feel that this topic directly related to what they are reading in class. In contrast, only fifty percent of students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that one event from the environmental series forum informed them of the texts they study in class.

The students generally answered yes to the survey questions two and three. The survey results of question two about ethics show that for most events, the students felt they learned something about how to benefit others or act responsibly, for example to protect the environment. Only one percent in spring 2016 disagreed, compared to no one in fall 2016. In spring 2016, 78% agreed or strongly agreed that the events improved their awareness of ethical issues and implications, compared to 81% in the fall. Roughly twenty percent were neutral in both semesters.

In most responses to the third question about the event having practical implications on their life, community and the world, the answer is yes. In fact, 94% in both spring and fall 2016 agreed or strongly agreed that the events had practical implications. In response to the "Teach Me to Be Wild" documentary screening and subsequent shared circle, 100% strongly agree that the event had practical personal, social, and global implications. Only two percent is neutral and two percent disagree in spring 2016, compared to one percent being neutral and one percent disagreeing in fall 2016.

The responses to the fourth question about the event helping to develop tools and methods of inquiry vary. In spring 2016 most students said yes, but twelve out of sixty-five said no. Many students felt they understood Buddhist terminology and concepts better after hearing the lecture by Ajahn

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<sup>1</sup> Of the twenty students surveyed, 15 strongly agreed, 2 agreed, 1 was neutral, 1 disagreed, and 1 strongly disagreed.

Pasanno and the informal discussion with Bhikkhu Bodhi. Many comments reflect their appreciation of hearing long-time cultivators share aspects of their practice. One student remarked, "The talk clarified various key aspects of practice - the aim/marker of wholesome/unwholesome mental states, the direction experience aspect of it, etc." Similarly, another said, "Very complementary and supportive of studying Buddhist methods of practice." About Clare Ronzani's lecture, a student reflected:

Solitude is a way of connection, not escape. Goal of life = unity with all & with oneself. Opening up the heart to see others as self = deep connection. Self = bringing true self to the community. Responsibility = not getting involved in the mass so that we would not lose our responsibility. True solitude is to connect with everyone, compassionate toward others.

Another trend in responses to question four comes from an appreciation of learning about other traditions. After attending G.U. Thite's lecture, one student commented, "Gained appreciation for ancient methods of reciting Veda texts." After listening to Ajahn Pasanno's talk, a student said that it "helped me gain a better understanding of different traditions." In this way, the events are helping students to develop not only appreciation for different ideas, but also tools and methods of inquiry to varying degrees.

The final survey item is a request for "further feedback or suggestions for future co-curricular activities." The co-curricular committee has collected detailed information about what students want. The most common response is "More of this!" But students want to host events that "speak to and influence the course of major current issues that impact the wellbeing of many." Others want to see more practice-oriented events, lauding the visualization in Ron Epstein's talk and the practice of memorization touched on by G.U. Thite. One student wrote, "Talks by experts who bring a 'living dimension' to what we're exploring conceptually are helpful - how to apply/practice." Students want more interfaith events and new topics. They also prefer to have the room set up in a circle, a more inclusive arrangement to encourage participation. Finally, there was a suggestion to host an event about how to balance a diet, which has been passed onto the Wellness program in Campus Life.

Student feedback shapes future decisions and is used to make adjustments to programming. The results of the surveys are always reviewed by the entire committee at the next scheduled meeting. In response to this feedback, a number of changes have been instituted. For example, based on direct feedback that too many lectures did not leave students enough time to complete their homework, the committee decided to have, on average, one main co-curricular activity per month. The committee also made adjustments to when the events were held so as to accommodate students. In addition, the committee voted to add a Program Learning Outcome to the list of outcomes that co-curricular events intend to foster. The one added was BA PLO 2 to "Cultivate a flexibility of mind to adapt to changing conditions." In addition, the committee made a concerted effort to address a diverse set of topics related to the curriculum that have not received as much attention, including topics from the Chinese Classics and Western Classics strands. The events of the Spring 2017 semester include a Guqin concert, a lecture on a Christian monk, an informal conversation with Bhikkhu Bodhi (co-organized with Spiritual Life), a lecture on Western and Eastern liturgies, and a video screening of a documentary about how wild animals forge unexpected and empathetic connections with wounded children that lead to transformation. By touching on different elements in the curriculum, the committee attempted to address explicitly stated student interests, such as interreligious dialogue and how to practice. The co-curricular events strive to inspire students to think creatively about how they can put into practice in the modern world what they learn in the classical texts.

## Organization

The co-curricular committee includes Jin Jr Shr (faculty), Lauren Bausch (faculty), James Roberts (instructor and Residential Coordinator), Thao Phi (staff), Jason Tseng (Campus Life), and Angela Morelli (Student Activities).

The committee is tasked with reviewing and approving event proposals, hosting and providing support services for the events, and processing the surveys for evaluation. Minutes for each meeting are kept and approved by the entire committee at the following meeting. All members of the committee share equal rank and responsibility within the committee. All proposals, changes based on evaluations, and other such decisions are discussed and approved by the entire group. Members take turns hosting co-curricular speakers and activities and providing critical support for the operation of the events.

## PROGRAM VIABILITY & SUSTAINABILITY

### Allocation of Resources

The committee members dedicate five to ten percent of their time to organizing and reviewing co-curricular programs.

The 2016-2017 co-curricular budget was:

Item	Cost	Quantity	Total Cost
Honorarium for distinguished speaker	\$ 250.00	5	\$ 1,250.00
Honorarium for local speaker	\$ 150.00	5	\$ 750.00
Logistics: dinner, transportation, etc.	\$ 200.00	10	\$ 1,000.00
Miscellaneous: printing, refreshments, etc.	\$ 50.00	10	\$ 500.00
<b>Total Budget Request</b>			<b>\$ 3,500.00</b>

The 2017-2018 budget, which increased from last year by \$1000 to add funds for a weekend conference or other such special event, is:

Honorarium for distinguished speaker	\$250.00	5	\$1,250.00
Honorarium for local speaker	\$150.00	5	\$750.00
Logistics for distinguished speakers: dinner, transportation, etc.	\$200.00	5	\$1,000.00
Miscellaneous: printing, refreshments, etc.	\$50.00	10	\$500.00
Weekend Event	\$1,000.00	1	\$1,000.00
<b>Total Budget Request</b>			<b>\$4,500.00</b>

On average, co-curricular programming spends a hundred dollars per student. Human and other material resources are provided by the university at large. The programming costs are low because there is no charge for the facilities it uses, which include the DRBU conference room and the Sudhana Center Chan Hall. Members of the committee are working to improve, without financial contribution, the light

and sound equipment available at the Sudhana Center for large events. The committee primarily assists with sound, room reservation, and room-setup and cleanup, but also with providing recording, a projector, and arranging guest accommodations. Speakers who stay overnight are lodged in cottages at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, for which there is no charge to the university. The following is a table of the number of times specific services have been requested by event hosts to support their event:

Frequency Event Hosts Request Co-curricular Services:

On-campus accommodations for outside guest	6	46.2%
Sound	10	76.9%
Internet Streaming	2	15.4%
Recording	6	46.2%
Projector	8	61.5%
Room Reservation	11	84.6%
Helping with room setup	12	92.3%
Helping with room cleanup	12	92.3%
Other	5	38.5%

**SUMMARY REFLECTIONS**

After reviewing the above criteria, the program review committee deems the co-curricular programs to be properly aligned with the mission of the university to convey knowledge and activate the intrinsic wisdom possessed by all individuals. These academically-constituted programs are aligned with the needs of the constituents that this program serves. The quality of the events, as well as the presenters and the lectures they give, is of a very high standard. The program goals—to extend learning outside the classroom, build community, raise awareness of important issues, and apply what is learned in the classical texts to the modern world—are being achieved. Student learning outcomes are being achieved at the expected level, to the extent that each program addresses those outcomes.

**FUTURE GOALS & PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The program review committee applauds co-curricular programming at DRBU and suggests that in the future the committee extend the range of topics and organize lectures and events that address all aspects of the DRBU curriculum. Areas of interest within the curriculum to be targeted include Western philosophy—both ancient and modern, math, science, rhetoric, and languages. Although the program review committee recognizes that a genuine attempt has been made by the committee to find relevant speakers, the committee should strive, as WASC informally suggested, to organize lectures on feminist philosophy and healthy relationships. After sufficient data is collected from surveys, clear parameters for attendance and survey responses should be determined to provide consistent success markers. While collecting information about which PLOs apply to different events, having a set parameter will enable tracking of the measure of effectiveness over time. The data from all surveys should be aggregated for easier analysis. Per student demand, the co-curricular committee can explore teaming up with Spiritual Life to host more interfaith and practice-oriented lectures. As DRBU’s student population grows, the co-curricular committee may need to search for additional means of gauging student interest and needs.