

Program Review Self-Study Report
Dharma Realm Buddhist University
Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts
Prepared by the Program Review Committee
September 2021

Section One: Introduction, Context, and Mission Alignment

A. Brief History of DRBU's BA in Liberal Arts Program

The Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts is one of two degree programs DRBU currently offers. In 2010, DRBU began a multi-year self-study to 1) reaffirm and interpret the University's mission and to lay out a roadmap for DRBU to follow in realizing its long-term educational vision, 2) develop a strategy to broaden its reach to a more diverse set of students, and 3) consider pursuing regional accreditation. The creation of the two degree programs dovetailed with the process of reaffirming and interpreting DRBU's mission: the mission drives and informs formulation and adoption of the programs' high-level design principles, while the process of fleshing out details about the programs in turn helps the community to further and more deeply understand the mission.

Besides the rephrased mission and the institutional learning outcomes, creation of these two programs was the primary output of the 2010 self-study process and much, if not all, of DRBU's activities and organizations are structured to align with and support these programs. Here are several relevant examples from the academic program review:

- The two degree programs use a variation of a model commonly referred to as “Great Books” and share the following features with other such programs:
 - An all-required and sequenced curriculum that consists of a series of classical primary texts.
 - A discussion-centered pedagogy that eschews lectures given by professors acting as academic specialists.
- A single teaching faculty whose primary responsibility is teaching in the two programs with the understanding that:
 - Professors will teach across the curriculum.
 - Professors are not organized by department, specialty, or program.
 - Though they are encouraged and supported to engage in scholarship activities, professors are not required to take on conventional academic research.
- The teaching faculty participates in significant ways in the university's governance:
 - Professors and senior administrators collectively form the faculty at DRBU that makes high-level policy decisions.
 - As part of the faculty, professors participate in the review and appointment of the president and the appointment of the academic dean.

- Collectively, professors have sole oversight over all matters related to instruction.

In short, the BA program in Liberal Arts is one of only two degree programs DRBU offers, and it lies at the core of the University’s operation. The program is not part of a separate academic department and because it has an all-required and sequentially-built curriculum, offers no choice of major or concentration.

DRBU concluded its 2010 Self-Study in 2013 and subsequently launched the two degree programs—the first BA and MA students matriculated in Fall 2014 and Fall 2013 respectively. In May 2013, the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education approved the two degrees. In December 2013, the WSCUC Eligibility Review Committee (ERC) (see [Attachment 1.1](#)) granted DRBU eligibility to pursue WSCUC Candidacy and Initial Accreditation. After two Seeking Accreditation Visits by WSCUC peer reviewers in March 2016 and November 2017, WSCUC granted DRBU Initial Accreditation in March 2018 (see [Attachment 1.2](#) for WSCUC Team Report and [Attachment 1.3](#) for WSCUC Action Letter). As of Summer 2021, three cohorts (Classes of 2019-21) have graduated from the newly accredited BA program.

The two new degree programs supplanted six BPPE-approved legacy programs, several of which DRBU had operated since its inception in 1976. The “sunsetting” of these six legacy programs was completed in 2015.

B. Program Descriptions

The DRBU Catalog (and the [website](#)) contains detailed descriptions of the BA program. In short, the BA program’s all-required curriculum weaves together the following ten strands of courses:

- Buddhist Classics
- Western Classics
- Chinese Classics
- Indian Classics
- Mathematics
- Natural Sciences
- Language
- Rhetoric and Writing
- Music
- Capstone

These courses are spread over four years and 120 units. The program features classical primary texts studied and discussed in a pro-seminar setting, conducted in the spirit of shared interpretive inquiry. Through close reading and discussions, students are able to enter into the dynamic dialogues from which many of these texts first emerged. They engage the material more intimately, as if sitting as participant-observers in discourses that stimulated critical inquiry and self-reflection then; thus reanimating it now. This direct encounter with an original source can often trigger a reexamination of assumptions and presuppositions—personal and cultural—about human nature and our place in the world. Regardless of the subject matter, all classes aim to

encourage and guide students in their efforts to activate their inherent wisdom and capacity for direct personal understanding. To this end, students and faculty closely interact as they mutually explore through dialogue and discourse. Discussion is intended to create a lively yet respectful atmosphere in which to clarify, present, exchange, and challenge ideas. In conjunction with the courses, each semester students also participate in a multi-day contemplative exercise immersion (CEI) during a week when all seminar classes are paused. A focus on classical texts, both in seminars and through contemplative exercises, can thus provide a foundation for a lifelong pursuit of learning, ever-deepening inquiry, and self-reflection.

Although students receive letter grades, the program also provides formal feedback through semesterly student conferences. During these end-of-semester conferences, students meet with all the professors that teach them that term. The professors give substantive feedback to students on their strengths and weaknesses in learning based on the learning outcomes, as well as offer advice on how the students might improve in the next term. Students are invited to reflect on their growth and challenges of this semester and to share how they would like to grow moving forward, as well as to provide feedback to their professors and DRBU. This can include describing highlights for them during the term and suggesting how the university can further support their learning and living experiences. A professor is assigned to take notes during each conference and to write up a report to keep with the student's record (see [Attachment 1.4](#)).

In addition to satisfactory completion of the courses, all seniors are required to present a final essay in the Spring semester of their fourth year, as part of the Rhetoric and Writing strand. The process of writing the senior essay begins in the Fall of senior year, when a student submits a senior essay proposal describing the topic and the organization of the essay, as well as the primary texts to be used. Students are then assigned a senior essay adviser with whom they are encouraged to meet frequently to review their progress. Students are also given an hour-long oral examination focusing on their senior essay. Both the senior essay and the oral examination must be successfully completed before graduation.

C. Mission Alignment

DRBU's 2010 Self Study focused on reaffirming, interpreting, and devising strategies to advance its mission. The BA in Liberal Arts (along with the MA) is a direct outcome of this self-study. The mission statement of DRBU, formally adopted in 2013 after the self-study, is as follows:

Dharma Realm Buddhist University is a community dedicated to liberal education in the broad Buddhist tradition—a tradition characterized by knowledge in the arts and sciences, self-cultivation, and the pursuit of wisdom. Its pedagogical aim is thus twofold: to convey knowledge and to activate an intrinsic wisdom possessed by all individuals. Developing this inherent capacity requires an orientation toward learning that is dialogical, interactive, probing, and deeply self-reflective. Such education makes one free in the deepest sense and opens the opportunity to pursue the highest goals of human existence.

The following three institutional learning outcomes (ILO), and subsequently the nine program

learning outcomes (PLO) for the BA program, further elaborate the aims set forth in DRBU’s mission:

Table 1.1

ILO	PLO
<p>ILO 1: A liberally educated person will develop and practice skills for lifelong learning, which encompass sound judgment; the flexibility to constantly assess evolving internal and external conditions; and accordingly, the ability to reconsider, adjust, alter, or even abandon his or her course or stance.</p>	<p>PLO 1: Demonstrate ethical awareness. PLO 2: Cultivate a flexibility of mind to adapt to evolving conditions. PLO 3: Demonstrate critical thinking skills. PLO 4: Exercise quantitative reasoning skills.</p>
<p>ILO 2: A liberally educated person will appreciate the methods of inquiry and insights suggested by the primary texts, particularly in the study of human nature, the workings of causality, and the complex interconnections among the personal, the social, and the natural worlds.</p>	<p>PLO 5: Appreciate and defend different systems of thought as conveyed within the primary texts in the curriculum. PLO 6: Demonstrate fluency in the use of tools and methods of inquiry from different traditions and disciplines presented in the curriculum.</p>
<p>ILO 3: A liberally educated person will communicate in a clear, nuanced, candid, and skillful manner.</p>	<p>PLO 7: Practice thoughtful and probing dialogue combined with close listening to assess the context and the character of the audience. PLO 8: Compose coherent arguments and narratives. PLO 9: Evaluate and responsibly use and share information resources.</p>

DRBU’s website features a more extended elaboration on the connection between the mission, the learning outcomes, and the model and design of the BA (and the MA) program ([link to webpage](#)). Overall, the program learning outcomes represent the breadth of knowledge, intellectual skills, habits of mind, and ethical sensibilities students will develop that are essential to succeed in almost any endeavor. In honing and exercising the ability to inquire—even about the nature of inquiry itself and the role one plays in it—students can increasingly tap into an “inherent wisdom possessed by all,” allowing them to see through any constraints and limitations that may arise from an obscured and imperfect vision. The BA program prepares graduates to be active, thoughtful, and caring citizens of the larger world and smaller communities to which they belong. They might enrich their lives with appreciation of one or more of the arts, engage in informed discussion on vital issues of our time, and form considered opinions on emerging trends in the fields of science, technology, education, public policy, and the arts. Overall, they will be ready to play a meaningful role in society and to enjoy a life that is purposeful, productive, and humane.

The prominence of non-European—such as Buddhist, Indian, and Chinese—core texts in the BA program makes it unique among “Great Books” style undergraduate programs, thereby adding

diversity to this small-but-strong group. The strong focus on core texts, the discussion-centric pedagogy, and the program's attempt to integrate contemplative exercises with reading of primary texts make the program an alternative to traditional undergraduate programs that feature the study of Buddhism.

The WSCUC SAV 1 Visiting Team was generous in its affirmation of DRBU and its programs: "DRBU has much to offer higher education as in its core educational programs, it is demonstrating how a university can advance its mission and serve its communities on campus and well beyond. It offers a model of education that adds to the rich diversity of US higher education."

D. Challenges in Maintaining Mission Alignment

DRBU's mission is the driving force behind the conceptualization and design of the BA program and the institutional support for it (governance, administration, etc.)—the mission is "part of the DNA" of the program, to use a popular metaphor of today. However, maintaining the alignment is not without its challenges:

- The learning curve is steep for existing and new teaching faculty to adapt to a pedagogy which asks them to emphasize primary sources over secondary treatments and favor raising deep questions and stimulating student engagement in discussions over delivering insights and conclusions based on disciplinary expertise through lecturing. More discussions on this challenge will follow in a later section.
- Systematic, consistent communication and onboarding processes have been lacking for new faculty and staff. Even though the growth of faculty and staff has been modest since the inception of the degree programs, resources and processes for onboarding and ongoing development need improvement to communicate the connection between the mission and the programs.
- Collectively interpreting the mission and the student learning outcomes for the purpose of text selection and course sequencing is a challenge. More discussion on this challenge will follow in a later section.

List of Attached Evidence for Section One:

- 1.1 [Letter from ERC Granting Eligibility](#)
- 1.2 [WSCUC SAV 1 Visiting Team Report](#)
- 1.3 [WSCUC 2018 Action Letter](#)
- 1.4 [Sample Student Conference Report](#)

Section Two: Response to Recommendations From Previous Review

DRBU has conducted academic program reviews before (for the MA program in 2017), but this is the first formal program review for the BA in Liberal Arts program. Therefore, there are no recommendations from the previous cycle to respond to at this time. DRBU completed the MA program review in 2017 just prior to receiving Initial Accreditation from WSCUC. In WSCUC's March 2018 Action Letter, the Commission recommends that DRBU completes program reviews for other academic and student affairs programs, including for the BA program (see [Attachment 1.3](#)).

Section Three: Effective Student Learning

Integration of curriculum, pedagogy, and learning outcomes

Reaffirming the mission and pursuing regional accreditation were two of the main driving forces behind DRBU's wide-ranging 2010-2013 Self Study. Therefore, drafting program learning outcomes (PLOs) that are aligned with the mission, constructing the curriculum, and adopting the pedagogy were all integral parts of the BA program's design process. This strong connection was sufficiently evident to and noted by the WSCUC SAVI reviewers: "From the outset, DRBU is poised to create an outcome-based curricula for the two new degrees." (See pg. 12 of [Attachment 1.2](#))

The [Mission and Educational Objectives page](#) of the DRBU website contains an essay that describes the integration between the mission, the learning outcomes, and the programs' curriculum and pedagogy. To ensure coverage of the PLOs across the integrated curriculum, the teaching faculty created a curriculum map for the BA program (see [Attachment 3.1](#)) as part of an outcome assessment framework (see [Attachment 3.2](#)).

Because the teaching faculty has collective oversight over the entire program, professors meet each semester to review syllabi, which includes the reading list, the PLOs correspondence to the course according to the curriculum map, the course outcomes, and the grading policy (see [Attachment 3.3](#) for sample syllabi from the program). Further, because the program has a common curriculum, any revision to the curriculum requires the teaching faculty's collective approval (see a subsequent section describing DRBU's process to revise the curriculum).

Course sequencing and availability

The BA program in Liberal Arts has an all-required and sequentially built curriculum, similar to other "Great Books"-style degree programs. Students, grouped in cohorts, progress through the four-year program according to a designated sequence (see pg. 12 of the catalog [Attachment 3.4](#) for the program sequence). A single cohort of between four and ten students has matriculated in each of six incoming classes since the program's launch in 2014. DRBU has offered and will continue to offer all courses in the program in any given academic year.

Because fall and spring courses are always taught in their respective semesters, and students are required to take courses in the program's designated sequence, students who are unable to complete a course will have to wait a year for the opportunity to take it again. Under this scenario, these students' time-to-degree will be lengthened by at least one year.

Students are required to take five semesters of language tutorials and can choose either classical Chinese or Sanskrit. They also may choose to split their five semesters between these two languages (e.g., two semesters of Sanskrit and three classical Chinese). The presence of the fifth semester language means that the program needs to offer three courses in classical Chinese and Sanskrit in the fall semesters. The program has faced challenges to offer the third and the most advanced language tutorial in either classical Chinese or Sanskrit.

External review and comparison of the program

While this is the first formal program review for the BA program, because of how integrated the two degree programs are with the entire institution, important components of the programs have undergone significant scrutiny as DRBU went through WSCUC’s Initial Accreditation process. The external review component of the 2017 MA program review also examines components that the MA and the BA programs share such as the review, scholarship, and professional development of the teaching faculty. The following table shows DRBU’s responses to previous external reviews that are relevant to the BA program:

Table 3. 1

Actions	Response to External Review
Improving the measurability of BA learning outcomes by devising outcome rubrics	Recommendation from 2013 WSCUC Eligibility Review
Adding contemporary texts to the Rhetoric and Writing and Western Classics reading list	Recommendation from 2013 WSCUC Eligibility Review
Adopting an outcome assessment process	Recommendation from 2016 WSCUC Commission Action Letter
Adopting an academic program review process	Recommendation from 2016 WSCUC Commission Action Letter
Refining the evaluation process for teaching faculty	Recommendation from 2016 WSCUC Commission Action Letter
Resourcing and supporting teaching faculty and students’ scholarship activities	Recommendation from 2016 WSCUC Commission Action Letter Recommendation by external reviewers of the 2017 MA Program Review
Reflections on writing instruction and students’ writing process in the BA program	Recommendation by external reviewers of the 2017 MA Program Review
Creating a standing committee for contemplative exercise immersion experience to further develop and integrate CE into the degree programs.	Recommendation by external reviewers of the 2017 MA Program Review

In the process of creating the MA in Buddhist Classics and the BA in Liberal Arts, DRBU studied and consulted with four peer institutions—[Thomas Aquinas College](#) (California), the former [Shimer College](#) (Illinois), the [Integral Program](#) at St. Mary’s College of California, and [St. John’s College](#) (in Maryland and New Mexico). All of these offer a four-year undergraduate liberal arts program based on the study of classical texts. St. John’s College (SJC) has an additional graduate institution, which offers degrees in Western liberal arts as well as in Eastern classics. DRBU faculty read extensive materials provided by these institutions, conducted interviews with their faculty and staff, and visited St. John’s College in New Mexico and the two

peer colleges located in California. Best practices from these distinguished peers—in areas such as program layout, number of units, text selection criteria, pedagogy and teaching methods, student academic preparation, difficulty of materials, pace of reading, and evaluation and feedback methods—were taken into consideration by DRBU professors in designing and carrying out the two new programs.

On the question of how DRBU’s two programs compare with those of their peers, the 2016 WSCUC SAVI reviewers seem to agree with DRBU’s assertion:

While the content of DRBU’s two new degree programs is distinct from that offered [by its peer institutions]...the structure and design of DRBU’s programs are largely similar to those of these peer institutions. The names of the degrees, length of the programs, number of credit hours, type and frequency of student course work, classroom methodology, and level of student access to and interaction with the faculty are all highly comparable.

On the other hand, none of these undergraduate “Great Books” programs features prominently non-European texts like DRBU’s BA (even though SMC’s Integral Program introduces several texts from the Asian and Islamic traditions they are not the main focus), nor do these programs include a contemplative component.

Process for revising the curriculum

The Faculty Governance Manual (excerpt 19-32 from DRBU professor handbook ([Attachment 3.5](#)) stipulates that only professors may vote on instructional matters during the faculty meetings (excerpt pg 24 of DRBU professor handbook [Attachment 3.6](#)) and that “[working] collectively to organize and determine all instructional matters such as content, methods of teaching, learning objectives, and methods of evaluation and assessment” is one of the primary responsibilities of the professors (excerpt pg 20-21 of the DRBU Professor Handbook [Attachment 3.7](#)). Section five of the Governance Manual also outlines a process by which the professors may revise the MA and the BA curricula (excerpt pg 25 of DRBU Professor Handbook [Attachment 3.8](#)).

The teaching faculty also reviews and approves revisions to syllabi every semester. Because the program is relatively new and all the courses have only been taught a handful of times, minor changes to the reading lists have been commonplace and are adopted during these semesterly reviews. The teaching faculty has employed the formal curricular change process for a significant revision of the program twice in its short history. The first revision took place in Spring 2015 and mainly entailed the reduction of required units for the degree from 128 to 120. The 2015 reduction is distributed in the Buddhist Classics and the Western Classics strands.

In Spring 2016, the teaching faculty adopted an additional revision of the distribution of units within the BA program (see [Attachment 3.9](#) for comparison the BA program unit distribution after the 2015 and 2016 revisions). The main changes of this 2016 revision are the following:

- Unit per course changed from three to four for most of the courses in the program. This means that full-time students—which virtually all BA students are—have four instead of five courses on their schedule in most semesters.

- The following table shows the change of unit and course distribution after and before (in parenthesis) the 2016 revision.
- Table 3.2

Strand	# of units / courses	Strand	# of units / courses
Buddhist Classics	16 (20) / 4 (8)	Natural Sciences	12 (12) / 3 (4)
Western Classics	16 (20) / 4 (7)	Language	20 (18) / 5 (6)
Indian Classics	12 (6) / 3 (2)	Rhetoric & Writing	10 (8) / 4 (4)
Chinese Classics	12 (12) / 3 (4)	Music	6 (6) / 2 (6)
Mathematics	12 (12) / 3 (4)	Capstone	4 (6) / 2 (2)

- Buddhist and Western Classics saw the biggest reduction not only in units but also the most presence in the program. In the original layout of the program, both strands have 24 units (eight courses) and are held every semester. After 2016, students have only four courses (sixteen units) in each of these strands and they only take place in alternating semesters. Capstone and Music are the two other strands that saw a reduction in number of units and courses, respectively.
- Indian Classics, Language, and Rhetoric & Writing gained units during the 2016 revision.

The 2015 and the 2016 revisions were attempts to make the program less demanding for the initial cohorts of students: the 2015 revision reduced the average unit per semester from 16 to 15, and the main thrust of the 2016 revision was to reduce the number of courses that students take per semester (from 5 to 4). At the time of these changes, the program had only matriculated one cohort, so it is difficult to conclude whether these revisions have their intended effects.

The BA program has operated under the current layout of courses and unit distribution across the different strands for the past five years, and two unintended consequences of the 2016 program revision deserve the teaching faculty's close attention. First, having Buddhist Classics (and to a lesser extent, Western Classics) in only every other semester of the program is a significant deviation from the program's original design where the strand is present in every semester. As originally conceived, the Buddhist Classics strand was to serve as the anchor of the BA program that strives to facilitate encounters with the core texts from within their own hermeneutical systems and traditions (see ILO 2 and PLO 5). The originally 8-course Buddhist Classic strand allows for adequate time and attention not only for each work to "speak for itself" in students' dialogues with it but also for the internal hermeneutical systems of the tradition to develop and come to the foreground. Ideally, students would get to spend equally ample time in each of the other classics strand in the curriculum, but it is not feasible under the confines of a four-year, 120-unit BA program. With only 16 (out of 120) units it is difficult for the Buddhist Classics strand to serve as the anchor for the entire BA program, and without an anchor, this broad, multi-tradition, and multi-discipline program can come across as fragmentary and lacking focus to students and faculty.

Second, prior to the 2016 revision, students took six 3-unit language courses in the first three years of the program: two semesters of classical Chinese and two semesters of Sanskrit (in that order) in the first two years, and a choice of either for two more semesters. Under this arrangement, the program would offer no more than two courses in either language in any given semester. Since the revision, students take five 4-unit courses, one fewer than before. However, the faculty also changed the language requirement so that students are not required to study both classical Chinese and Sanskrit but may choose to study one language for five semesters. In order to accommodate this change, DRBU needs to offer three courses in classical Chinese and Sanskrit in the fall term. This has presented challenges despite the fact that DRBU's three most recently hired teaching faculty have academic training in either classical Chinese or Sanskrit. The language tutorials are the most difficult courses for teaching faculty without prior preparation to take on as part of their process of teaching across the curriculum. Classical Chinese and Sanskrit are both difficult languages to learn and opportunities for those without background to develop their abilities to teach these courses, either through co-teaching assignments or course relief, have been hard to come by.

This program review self-study offers a good opportunity for close examination and reflection on the current unit and course distribution, program integration, and reading lists. The teaching faculty has held focused conversations on the Buddhist Classics and Rhetoric & Writing strands (see [Attachment 3.10](#) and [Attachment 3.11](#) for notes). The goal of these continuing discussions is to lead to changes, through the curricular change process outlined above, that are both beneficial to student learning and feasible in terms of program operation.

Co-curricular learning opportunities

DRBU offers co-curricular learning programs and activities through a variety of units to both MA and BA students, as well as to the larger DRBU community. Co-curricular programs and activities are “not part of the prescribed sequences of courses in an academic program” ([WSCUC Glossary](#)) and contribute to student learning in a holistic way. The BA program does not currently offer credit for out-of-class learning experiences.

Symposium

With a broad approach to co-curricular learning opportunities, DRBU has expanded its definition of what qualifies as a co-curricular program or activity. In Fall 2017, the committee formerly called “Co-curricular Programs and Activities” was rebranded as “Symposium”. Symposium is a committee of faculty and staff members that organizes particular co-curricular programs and activities:

Symposium 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.

The committee has offered a total of 20 programs since 2017:

Table 3.3

Fall 2017	Dr. Dr. Chang Qing, “Temples, Images, and Offerings: A Basic Knowledge of Buddhist Art and Its History” and “The Spirit of Meditation: Zen Patriarchs and Art”
	Dr. Shu-Shang Chang, “Fibonacci and the Golden Ratio”
	Dr. Lauren Bausch, “The Kāṇva Brāhmaṇas & Buddhists in Kosala”
	Ven. Kaccāna Bhikku, PhD, “Spiritual Friendship and Communal Harmony”
Spring 2018	Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi, PhD, “Practical Dependent Origination”
	Dr. Ron Epstein, “Responsible Living: Explorations in Applied Buddhist Ethics”
	"Unlocking the Cage", Movie Screening and Discussion
Fall 2018	A Workshop with Allen Ling, “Creating Comics from Classical Texts”
	Dr. Jane Bleasdale, “Jesuit Practice of Contemplatives in Action”
	A Conversation with Alex de Grassi, “Creativity, Music, & Spirit”
Spring 2019	Dr. Susan Fernsebner, “Exploring Neo-Confucian Visions of Childhood and Children’s Education”
	Dr. Stefan Baums, “Ancient Buddhist Manuscripts from Gandhāra: An Introduction”
	Professor Ronald Y. Nakasone, “In the Buddha's Footsteps” and Art Exhibit
Fall 2019	Dr. Robert Buswell, “Korean Buddhist Monastic Life: A ‘Counterparadigm’ of Zen Practice” and “A Place for Doubt: The Practice of ‘Questioning Meditation’ (Kanhua Chan) in Korean Sōn Buddhism”
	Dr. Kristi Wiley, “An Introduction to Jainism”
	Dr. Michael Nylan, “Politics of the Common Good in Early China”
Spring 2020	Dr. Matt Orsborn, “Interpreting Wisdom — hermeneutics and translation of the Prajñāpāramitā”
Fall 2020	Reverend Robert McKnight, Black Lives Matter and Its Historical Context: A Dialogue

The committee also offers a special co-curricular program annually called the Student Symposium. Each year, the event is held in the spring semester, with the first Student

Symposium organized in Spring 2018. Students may submit an abstract to present an individual paper or a student panel that centers around a common theme or class. Students have a designated time to present their paper followed by a short question and answer session with the audience. As part of the assessment process, participants give direct feedback on their learning experience. Students who are in attendance but not participating in Student Symposium are given the general survey.

Academic Resource Center (ARC)

DRBU's Academic Resource Center offers various co-curricular learning opportunities. This department is a collaboration among tutoring, counseling and career services. Tutoring services offer individual tutoring in various academic areas, as well as various workshops on the writing process and other topics. Career services offers individual career counseling, career panel workshops, and assistance with finding internships or work placement. DRBU offers equal access to and full participation in educational and co-curricular activities to students with disabilities and will readily make accommodations for such students as mandated by federal law.

Campus Life

Co-curricular learning opportunities are also available through DRBU's student affairs department, Campus Life. Campus Life has restructured its mission statement to better align with DRBU's mission statement:

DRBU Campus Life aims to foster a caring campus environment that supports students in the activation and embodying of intrinsic wisdom. This is a process of self-cultivation grounded in virtue and guided by insights derived from the study of classical texts. It encompasses all aspects of the student experience. It transforms the relationship with self, others, and the social and natural worlds. We also aspire to create opportunities for students to learn essential life skills that contribute to their well-being and the well-being of communities they participate in.

Campus Life is comprised of seven units: New Student Orientation, Residential Life, Spiritual Life, Service Scholarship, Student Activities, Health Services, and Dining Services. Most units have a dimension of co-curricular learning involved in their program and activities. All new students are required to attend New Student Orientation, where they learn about DRBU's academic and student life offerings. While Residential Life provides students with living accommodations, there is much learning that comes from communal living and there are weekly meetings to check-in. Student Residential Assistants (RAs) are another part of the co-curricular learning opportunity for students who are involved as staff members. Spiritual Life provides opportunities for students to participate in Buddhist practices such as meditation and chanting on campus and offers instructional workshops by guest speakers. In Student Activities, the student organizations facilitate student learning through presentations and activities centering around different topics, including spoken Chinese and Spanish, interfaith religions, tea ceremonies, and art techniques. Service scholarship is offered as part of DRBU's financial aid package for all students who need financial assistance. Students in the service scholarship program work up to 13 hours a week under supervision in a variety of jobs on campus. Each Campus Life unit is in

the process of clarifying how their unit aligns with the PLOs. DRBU is developing more robust methodologies to assess and evaluate each unit. Further examples can be found in three of the units that have gone through a more extensive self-study.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, DRBU provided opportunities for students to study Mandarin in the summer at several Taiwanese universities—including National Taiwan Normal University. The university helped with logistics and financial aid. DRBU has signed sister institution agreements with several Taiwanese institutions— [Huafan University](#), National Taiwan University of the Arts, Fujen Catholic University and [Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts](#)—and has begun to explore potential study abroad programs for both BA and MA students.

Contemplative exercise component of the curriculum

Liberal education at DRBU is based on the belief that students possess an inherent capacity for wisdom. Central to DRBU's pedagogy is the aim to activate the students' capacities for knowing for and through themselves. The seminal texts of both Eastern and Western traditions come embedded with sophisticated methods for deep questioning, testing, and affirming. These methods sometimes take the form of “contemplative exercises”—exercises designed to be probing, engaging, and deeply self-reflective. Their aim is to promote close listening to oneself and to bolster a confidence that comes from self-discovery and direct knowing for oneself. The contemplative exercises at DRBU are presented as techniques, immersion exercises, and catalysts for inner development, evoking and honing modalities and sensibilities that can shed light on the texts and potentially broaden our ways of knowing.

This component appears in the BA program in two ways. First, professors design and incorporate contemplative exercises in the classroom that complement the courses they are teaching. The second way that the contemplative component appears in the program is a multi-day (3-5) immersive activity called Contemplative Exercise Immersion (CEI) that takes place each semester during which all classes pause.

The teaching faculty works collectively on this integral component of the program, and created a CEI Committee in 2019 (see [Attachment 3.12](#) for the committee rationale). The committee has created a process for community members to submit ideas for future CEIs (see [Attachment 3.13](#) for the CEI Idea Template). In addition to designing and running the CEI, the committee also collaborates with Institutional Research to solicit feedback from faculty and students for ongoing improvements.

Since its inception, the CEI committee has been learning how to better implement and improve the immersions. First, an attempt has been made to diversify the practices offered to reflect the classical strands in the curriculum. Second, the committee keeps a record of all learning materials related to the CEI to facilitate curriculum design. Third, as the university population grows, the committee has experimented with various CEI locations. Fourth, during the 2020-2021 academic year when classes moved online, the CEIs also took place online, which required creative planning and flexibility. Fifth, more faculty and staff have been increasingly involved in planning and carrying out the CEI, including coordination among the teaching faculty to ensure support from the hosting classes, communication with campus life to plan

meals and support students outside the formal program, and many other faculty and staff volunteers during the immersion itself. [Attachment 3.14](#) contains a more detailed reflection on the CEI events since the creation of the committee.

Overall, two structural issues have surfaced. First, at the moment DRBU offers one CEI that's attended by both BA and MA students, who usually have different experience, interests and expectations regarding contemplative exercises. The MA students usually have more knowledge, experiences, and higher interest levels with Buddhist contemplative practices. There isn't enough capacity yet to create two CEIs tailored to the different needs of BA and MA students. As most of the CEIs are based on Buddhist practices, the second issue is how to better integrate CEI with the BA curriculum. A CEI is not programmatic but rather a "laboratory" component of a hosting course every semester. However, the Buddhist Classics course is only taught in the fall semester. We have been encouraging students to take a critical or phenomenological approach to CEI. Better integration with the BA curriculum also brings up the issues of how to articulate the relationship of CEI and the learning outcomes and how to assess those outcomes better.

DRBU solicits feedback from students through a detailed survey at the end of each CEI and through formal or informal communications with professors. Then faculty meet, share, and discuss their findings over multiple meetings and the conclusions will be used to inform the design of the next CEI. For example, one important issue is whether students receive sufficient support before, during, and after a CEI. In response to earlier student feedback, for the 2021-2022 academic year, the CEI committee added an orientation the week prior to both CEIs to better prepare students for what to expect during the immersion week. Further, feedback from Fall 2021 showed that some students wished to have some post-processing facilitated by professors. As a result, for Spring 2022, the CEI Committee added an optional exit interview component in addition to group debrief and sharing. The teaching faculty will continue to devote time and resources to improving and refining the contemplative exercise component.

Differentiation from MA program

While DRBU's MA and BA programs share the same discussion-driven pedagogy and reliance on primary texts, the BA in Liberal Arts differs from the MA in Buddhist Classics in three major ways. First, whereas the MA program focuses on and aims to deepen the investigation of Buddhist texts, the BA program has Buddhist Classics in dialogue with classics and great works from India, China, and Europe as well as natural sciences, mathematics, and music.

Second, the question of interpretation and meaning—central for both programs and constantly woven into class discussions—are foregrounded differently in the two programs: in the MA program, students examine major methodological approaches to the theory and practice of interpreting texts and human experience from the Buddhist and Western traditions in the program's five courses (Buddhist and Comparative) on hermeneutics. The Rhetoric and Writing courses in the BA program complement the Classics strand in an analogous way, as rhetoric, according to Aristotle, functions to "deliberate about things"—classical texts in the case of the program—"which seem to admit of issuing in [more than] two ways," thereby creates space for critical reflection on the wide range of texts that students read in the program's curriculum.

Finally, even though the areas that the MA’s PLOs cover naturally overlap those of the BA’s learning outcomes—since both programs’ outcomes stem from DRBU’s institutional learning outcomes—they are different in two ways. The BA PLOs are more introductory than the MA PLOs that cover the same area, for example, “ethical sensibility” (MA) versus “ethical awareness” (BA). Further, the BA PLOs are more numerous to encompass a wider range of intellectual skills—such as the five core competencies of written (PLO 8) and oral (PLO 7) communication, quantitative reasoning (PLO 4), information literacy (PLO 9), and critical thinking (PLO 3)—that are the within the mandate of any undergraduate program.

Do students understand the program’s model and philosophy?

The BA degree is a new program offered by a newly accredited university—a combination that presents significant challenges when it comes to recruiting students. Self-selection on the part of prospective students is an important factor. DRBU’s recruiting and admissions staff spend more time than those of established institutions interacting with prospective students in order to explain this somewhat unique program. Thus far, all the admitted students have been interviewed during the admissions process, and the majority of them have visited the campus before being admitted.

During orientation for new students, professors lead workshops that introduce the program’s educational model, philosophy, and pedagogy, and students gradually acclimate to the shared inquiry model throughout their first months at the program.

The Program Review Committee conducted a qualitative analysis of the student conference reports of 16 students from BA Class 2019, BA Class 2020, and BA Class 2021. In these interviews, 94% of the students shared their understanding and appreciation of the educational model. Student feedback is summarized in the table below, clustered around three major features of the educational model at DRBU.

Table 3.4 Student Understanding of the Educational Model (BA ‘19, ‘20, ‘21)

1. A core curriculum that consists of primary texts	2. Learning through shared inquiry	3. An integrated curriculum that weaves together ten distinct strands
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The primary texts from both East and West become a foundation for students to gain self-knowledge and engage in dialogues with others. ● Due to the seminal nature of these texts, the students expressed a strong intention to continue their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students have learned to listen deeply to others. ● Students have learned to remain open-minded and appreciate different lenses and perspectives, which has opened their vistas. ● Having studied within a culturally diverse cohort for four years, both their communication skills and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One student expressed that the language strand helped her to better understand contemplative texts, thus helping with her personal practice as well. ● Students expressed great appreciation for reading texts from cultural backgrounds that they

<p>learning with these classics for the rest of their lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students were deeply motivated to apply and embody the principles they had learned, as well as the insights they have gained from these texts, in the service of others in our modern time. ● Students greatly appreciated the methods of inquiry and insights suggested by the primary texts that helped elucidate the complex interconnections between the personal, the social, and the natural worlds. They especially benefited from the new light these classics shed on the environmental issues we are facing. 	<p>their interpersonal skills have greatly improved. This also transferred to their relationships outside the classroom and off campus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students have built the confidence to express themselves in a more clear, candid, and skillful manner. 	<p>were unfamiliar with. The diverse body of strands helped them to see the strengths and limitations of their personal assumptions and views.</p>
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Direct quotes from students:

“I really grew over the whole program, especially through the shared inquiry process, with the text as the medium. Overall I got the most out of just having conversations about these texts...I feel like I really get to know myself better and understand my role in the cohort.”

“We look at things from different perspectives. Shared-inquiry is such a good way of learning, because we can get away from our own fixed views and let wisdom arise during the discussion.”

“I have really enjoyed being in a container with like-minded people--who have the courage to look at their beliefs, and be open to other people and their ideas of the world. We learn to be willing to be wrong.”

B. Student Learning & Success

DRBU professors’ collective oversight of instruction extends to the activities of student learning outcome assessment, an important practice that helps to ensure the integrity of DRBU degrees.

Assessment at DRBU takes the form of a set of instruction-related exercises and processes carried out in the spirit of self-reflection, to gauge the University's success at facilitating students' development toward the educational objectives laid out in its mission. Given such understanding, assessment is an ongoing process that engages both teaching faculty and students and is enmeshed in many of DRBU's core instructional practices and activities.

Examples of these embedded assessment practices include close monitoring of student progress facilitated by the programs' small, discussion-centric classes; exchanges and collaborations between professors encouraged by their collective oversight over the curricula and the curricula's integrated nature; and the existence of good channels for regular bi-directional feedback between students and professors. These channels are exemplified by DRBU's semesterly student conferences, during which each student's professors get together with the student to discuss his or her progress in learning and invite the student to reflect and respond. The WSCUC SAVI Visiting Team reported discovering a richness in the records of these student conferences, "which contain feedback from instructors about each student's coursework during the semester."

In addition to these embedded activities and practices, DRBU's assessment framework includes several elements aimed at providing structures and formal occasions for the institution's self-reflection. These elements include student learning outcomes, the curriculum map, different types of assessment activities, and the assessment methodology.

The initial efforts to implement the assessment framework focused on the following areas:

- Improving the assessment instrument: The IR Office worked with members of the teaching faculty to revise all the existing rubrics for the BA PLOs and developed two new rubrics for PLO 7 Oral Communication—one on oral presentation ([Attachment 3.15](#)) and one on the shared inquiry ([Attachment 3.16](#)). During the revision process, the working group consulted the university's mission and vision, the institutional learning outcomes, and the VALUE rubrics (AAC&U). Since completing these major revisions, the IR Office has also been refining the rubrics continuously by incorporating feedback from assessment activities.
- Continuously refining the outcome assessment framework
 - Shifting the timing of assessment closer to graduation. In March 2018, the Program Review Committee assessed a sample of student work from two BA cohorts during their freshman years: the classes of 2019 and 2020. The intent of this assessment was to compare students' performance levels at the time of their entry with their levels at graduation. However, after studying *Component 4: Educational Quality; Student Learning, Core Competencies, and Standards of Performances at Graduation* in the WSCUC's Institutional Review Process Manual, the Program Review Committee decided to abandon this pre- and post-testing approach, which can be time consuming and methodologically challenging, and to shift the focus of assessment to students' levels of proficiency at graduation.

- Using triangulation to establish the validity of assessment results. To implement this practice, multiple sources of student data were used for assessment: sample student papers, senior theses, and final oral examinations. In addition, each sample student paper was anonymized and randomly assigned to two teaching faculty members. Each senior essay and oral exam were assessed by the thesis advisor and a second reader. We hope this multi-source multi-evaluator approach will generate more accurate results.
- Sampling for efficiency and meaning. We took into account two important factors when sampling work and sampling students: a) To ensure our assessment design covers the maximum possible PLOs, we selected student works from courses that complement each other based on their mapping onto the PLOs in the curriculum map; b) When sampling of student work was needed, work from a stratified sample of students who displayed varying abilities was carefully chosen.

Table 3.5 summarizes the timeline of assessment activities conducted for the three graduating cohorts. It also shows the types of student work selected, student sample percentages, evaluators, and links to the full assessment reports.

Table 3.5 Summary of Assessment Activities for the BA Program

Cohort	Assessment Date	Type(s) of student work selected	Sample percent age (sample size/population)	Evaluators	Link to assessment report
BA Class of 2019	May, 2019	Senior theses and oral exams	100%	Thesis advisors and second readers	Attachment 3.17
	October, 2019	Papers from two classics strands during their senior year	43%	Twelve members from the teaching faculty	

BA Class of 2020	May, 2020	Senior theses and oral exams	100%	Thesis advisors and second readers	Attachment 3.18
	April, 2021	Two papers during their senior year	50%	Twelve members from the teaching faculty	
BA Class of 2021	June, 2021	Senior theses and oral exams	100%	Thesis advisors and second readers	NA
BA Class of 2022 and BA Class of 2023	May, 2021	Observed a Math class and met with the instructors	100%	An IR staff and two course instructors	Attachment 3.19

- Setting the standards of performance.

The teaching faculty has collective oversight over all matters related to instruction at DRBU, including setting the standards of performance for student learning. In spring 2020, the teaching faculty agreed on a more holistic approach to the standards of performance required for graduation in the BA program. Ideally, students' work should score mostly three out of four ("Meets Expectations") across all PLOs at the point close to graduation.

Results and findings of 2019-2021 outcome assessment

Table 3.6 Cohort Mean Scores on PLOs

Class	PLO 1 Ethical awareness	PLO 2 Flexibility of mind	PLO 3* Critical thinking	PLO 5 Appreciate different systems of thought	PLO 6 Use of tools and methods	PLO 7* Oral communication	PLO 8* Written communication	PLO 9* Information literacy

					of inquiry			
2019 (n=7)	3.2	2.8	3.2	2.9	2.7	3.1 (67%)	3.1	3.4
2020 (n=6)	2.9	2.3	2.7	2.8	2.6	2.9 (50%)	2.8 (50%)	2.7
2021 (n=4)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.1 (50%)	3.1 (75%)	3.0 (50%)

Notes:

1. The scale of measurement is 1 through 4.
2. * indicates the PLOs that align with the Core Competencies
3. The percentages in the parentheses were the percentages of students in a cohort that reached a score of three whenever the entire cohort was assessed instead of a sample.
4. PLO 4 Quantitative Reasoning was not assessed for these three cohorts but the cohorts after.

From Table 3.6 we can see that, for the BA Class of 2019, their average scores were close to, or exceeded, three on all of the PLOs assessed. Their development on all the PLOs seemed to be relatively balanced. For the BA Class of 2020, overall, their average scores were a little lower than the previous cohort, with their relative weakness in PLO 2 Flexibility of Mind. For the BA Class of 2021, so far only the assessment results on three PLOs are available, and they are all above three. An interesting finding is that, based on the data from BA Class 2019 and 2020, we can see that on average the scores on the Core Competencies (PLO 3, 7, 8, 9, marked by *) were usually higher than those on the other PLOs (PLO 1, 2, 5, 6). Due to their nature, these PLOs, such as PLO 2 Flexibility of Mind, seem to be more difficult to assess in written work. Faculty members reported that these PLOs are less tangible and that they are also less clearly defined in the rubrics; therefore they are difficult to identify. Another issue is that students are less likely to exhibit these traits if they are not explicitly prompted to do so. All these considerations may have introduced measurement errors into the final assessment results.

For future assessments, we are considering adding more PLOs to assess in the senior theses, since it is considered the epitome of a student's learning and growth in the program, and it's usually the longest essay a student will write during the program, which leaves more space for the students to exhibit creative and nuanced thinking.

Summary of recommendations from the 2019-2020 outcome assessment

Issues related to instruction:

- Have a university-wide discussion about the meaning of the degree: what do we think an average graduate of the DRBU program should be able to do?
- Benchmarking: look at how our peer institutions set their student performance standards and compare our performance standards with theirs.
- Improving student writing
 - Have an ARC workshop to invite students to review and discuss the rubric for PLO 8 Written Communication together.
 - The teaching faculty should have a discussion about how to write a paper prompt that can facilitate the assessment of learning outcomes. We can also develop explicit guidelines for instructors on how to create paper prompts. This could even mean creating a suggested template with described flexibilities, as well as different templates for different types of writing assignments. For example, it could a. include descriptions of expectations for different types of assignments; b. list out the PLOs to assess
 - To aid students in their paper writing: Institute a drafting process so students can get feedback and incorporate it before submitting the final version. Encourage students to work closely with the instructor and writing tutor. Make it explicit to students that they can approach the writing process as a way of thinking.
 - Create a pedagogically oriented writing guide/rubric with each course/assignment for students: what constitutes a good paper? A poor paper? An exceptional paper?
 - Make sure we teach basic information literacy skills in the first year (maybe in Rhetoric and Writing), such as how to use the library and how to evaluate and use sources appropriately. We should set consistent expectations across classes.
 - Have a workshop for teaching faculty about MLA formatting so everyone is on the same page. Assistant professor Sarah Babcock is knowledgeable about the style and willing to lead a workshop. Create an MLA style sheet based on the most current requirements and give it to students early in the first semester.
- Clarifying and delineating PLOs
 - In regards to PLO 1 Ethical Awareness: dedicate a teaching seminar to brainstorming the range of possible items to include as evidence for this particular PLO. One faculty member suggested compiling examples that fall within ethical awareness, e.g., understanding of how karma works, transformation of their character, whether students are aware of general ethical issues and are able to communicate about them, etc...
 - In regards to PLO 2 Flexibility of Mind: Consider other formats of assessment or other sources of data.
 - In regards to PLO 6: Dedicate at least one teaching seminar to this PLO to ask: what constitutes “tools and methods?” What is the range of possible things to be included as evidence for this PLO?

Issues related to instrument:

- Continue to revise the rubrics based on the feedback we received.
- Prepare sample papers as an addendum to the rubrics.
- Create a glossary of important terms, such as “hermeneutical lens”
- Consider assessing PLO 1 Ethical Awareness in Indian Classics II

The initial efforts to assess PLO 4 Quantitative Reasoning

The IR Office started thinking about how to assess Quantitative Reasoning in late 2019. After a few meetings with the teaching faculty members who have taught Math, the office decided to do a class observation towards the end of a semester. Because instruction was moved online due to the pandemic, the first assessment activity didn’t happen until Spring 2021 when a staff member from the IR Office observed a Math II class on Zoom. Two BA cohorts were taking this class together—the BA Class of 2022 (juniors, cohort size=3) and the BA Class of 2023 (sophomores, cohort size=4). During the observation, the IR staff assessed each student on two PLOs: Quantitative Reasoning (PLO4) and Shared Dialogue (PLO 7). After the semester ended, the IR Office invited the instructor and the co-instructor to assess each student on the two PLOs based on student performance for the entire semester. The final scores presented below are the averages from three sources of evaluation: the instructor, the co-instructor, and the IR staff. In addition, the IR office had a meeting with the instructors to obtain qualitative feedback on student performance and to solicit feedback and reflections on the assessment method, rubrics, and instruction.

Results and findings from initial assessment efforts

Table 3.5 contains the full assessment report, which contains descriptions of the assessment method and process, qualitative and quantitative analyses and findings, and action items. In summary:

Regarding PLO 4 Quantitative reasoning, three out of the seven students reached, or were very close to, a competency score of three, among which two were juniors and one was a sophomore. On PLO 7 Shared inquiry, overall students have done an excellent job respecting each other in class and maintaining focused engagement with the content. However, there is still room for improvement in the area of “Listening,” which is defined in the rubric as “incorporates contributions of others; pursues collective dialogue; does not engage in outside work or other activities.”

Summary of recommendations from initial assessment efforts

- Issues related to instruction:
 - Check the completion status of assignments more consistently and hold students accountable for the expectations established at the beginning of a class. Do a mid-term personal check-in to give students feedback on their performances.

- When the new semester starts, re-orient students about what a Math class should be like in-person: it is designed to be a process of working through problems and learning together.
- Have a class discussion with students about how to practice listening skills to pursue collective dialogue and understanding.
- The IR Office plans to observe another Math class with the same group of students in Fall 2021 when students come back in person.
- Issues related to instrument:
 - Rubric for PLO 4 Quantitative Reasoning: One instructor was confused about the distinction between “Interpretation” and “Application/Analysis,” and suggested combining the two to simplify the rubric.
 - Best way(s) to assess PLO 4 and PLO 7. One instructor proposed group activities as a method of assessment, since one can observe a lot about a student's thinking process during demonstrations when one student demonstrates the solution to a problem while others in class contribute to the process. In addition, a math class provides a great environment to assess PLO 7 Shared Dialogue because it requires a lot of skills to have a productive dialogue when students debate whether a solution or problem-solving method is correct.

In addition to DRBU’s regular direct outcome assessment exercises, the University also conducts an annual student survey and a teaching faculty survey in 2021. See [Attachment 3.20](#) for a list of surveys conducted for the 2020-2021 academic year; the attachment also contains the links to the complete survey results. Based on the results, 100% of those responding to the Annual Student Survey 2020-2021 agreed that the program has helped them to develop in each of the nine PLOs.

Besides learning outcome assessment, DRBU collected and analyzed evidence for other indicators of student success. The findings are presented in the following sections.

Graduation and retention rates

The average four-year graduation rate for the first three matriculating classes of the BA program is 60%, and the program’s average retention rate so far (defined as the proportion of freshmen continuing onto sophomore year) is 84%. The six-year graduation rate (Spring 2021) for the first matriculating class is 100%. [Attachment 3.21](#) (BA Retention Rates) and [Attachment 3.22](#) (BA Graduation Rates) contain more detailed figures, including disaggregated figures by gender and race/ethnicity.

Post-graduation statistics

The following table shows the 1) employment rate of the graduates and 2) percentage of graduates entering further studies:

Table 3.7 Post-Graduation Statistics (Employment and Other)

Class	Number of Graduates	Employed	Continue to Advanced Study	Unknown
2019	7	4	3	0
2020	6	3	2	1
2021	4	2	2	0

Communication of program requirements and expectations

DRBU's all-required and sequentially built programs, though somewhat unusual, are arguably easier to understand than programs that use an elective system. BA students follow a predetermined sequence through the respective curriculum. Approximately one month prior to the start of every semester, students receive the course schedule in several ways:

- Email — The Office of Academic Affairs announces the course schedule through an email to all students, faculty, and staff of the University.
- Student Information System (SIS) — The Office of the Registrar publishes the course schedule on SIS and enrolls each cohort of students in its required list of courses. Students may access their course registration and register for language courses on SIS.
- Faculty Cohort Mentor Meetings — Faculty mentors of each cohort discuss the required courses with students at the regular cohort meetings. Mentors may address any questions on the curriculum or gather student concerns and feedback regarding the course schedule at this time.
- Bulletin Board — A paper copy of the schedule is posted on the bulletin board in the main lobby of the DRBU building.

Cohort mentors (see [Attachment 3.23](#)) are two professors assigned to each student cohort at the beginning of each academic year. They serve many of the same functions as a faculty adviser would in another institution. Cohort mentors typically meet with the whole cohort together, and help students with their academic plans, identify particular academic challenges, and locate academic support services. Students can request individual meetings with cohort mentors.

Channels for student feedback

Students have several formal channels by which to provide feedback to the program:

- Semesterly student conferences, during which each student's professors meet with the student to discuss his or her progress in learning and invite the student to reflect and respond.
- Cohort mentors (see previous section), who typically meet with the whole cohort regularly and with whom students can also request individual meetings. Both the group and individual meetings are also occasions for students to provide feedback on the program.
- Anonymous course evaluations, which students fill out at the end of each semester.
- Student surveys, which DRBU regularly conducts in order to solicit feedback on the

programs.

Students do not have official representation at faculty meetings, but with the formal and informal channels described in this report, student feedback is regularly solicited and considered.

C. Students

See [Attachment 3.24](#) for graphs showing the profile of BA students at DRBU.

List of Attached Evidence for Section Three:

- 3.1 [Curriculum Map for BA Program](#)
- 3.2 [DRBU Academic Assessment](#)
- 3.3 [Sample Syllabi](#)
- 3.4 [BA Program Sequence](#)
- 3.5 [Faculty Governance Manual](#)
- 3.6 [Excerpt from Faculty Governance Manual - Professor Curriculum Oversight](#)
- 3.7 [Excerpt from Faculty Governance Manual - Teaching Faculty Responsibilities](#)
- 3.8 [Excerpt from Faculty Governance Manual - Curricular and Instructional Change Procedure](#)
- 3.9 [Comparison of BA unit distribution after the 2015 and 2016 program revisions](#)
- 3.10 [notes about teaching faculty holding focused conversations about Buddhist Classics](#)
- 3.11 [notes about teaching faculty holding focused conversations about Rhetoric & Writing strands](#)
- 3.12 [CEI Committee Rationale](#)
- 3.13 [CEI Idea Template](#)
- 3.14 [A Reflection from Professor Lauren Bausch on behalf of the CEI Committee](#)
- 3.15 [BA Oral Presentation Rubric](#)
- 3.16 [BA Shared Inquiry Rubric](#)
- 3.17 [BA '19 Assessment Report](#)
- 3.18 [BA '20 Assessment Report](#)
- 3.19 [BA Quantitative Reasoning Assessment Report](#)
- 3.20 [List of Surveys Conducted in 2020-2021](#)
- 3.21 [BA Retention Rates](#)
- 3.22 [BA Graduation Rates](#)
- 3.23 [Cohort Mentors Catalog Excerpt](#)
- 3.24 [BA Student Profile \(Fall 2021 Snapshot\)](#)

Section Four: Faculty Quality and Development

After DRBU designed the MA in Buddhist Classics and the BA in Liberal Arts, it also reorganized the teaching faculty—its governance, organization, and decision-making; what it means to teach at DRBU; and the process for hiring, review and feedback, promotion, and termination—to better support these two programs. DRBU studied practices from the general higher education environment, and paid special heed to those from colleges with similar models—those using an all-required curriculum on classical primary texts taught in discussion-centric seminars. In this and other regards, DRBU is indebted to the generous, open sharing and continuing friendship from St John’s College, the Integral Program at St Mary’s College of California, and Thomas Aquinas College. Reflective of the generalist and integrated nature of the programs, DRBU’s teaching faculty is not differentiated by department or program and courses are not assigned to specific professors. This section contains brief descriptions of DRBU’s policies, procedures, and practices relating to the teaching faculty and how these support the programs.

A. Teaching at DRBU

Because of the integrated nature of its two programs, all members of the teaching faculty, or professors, have collective oversight and teach across both programs. The DRBU Professor Plan of Employment ([Attachment 4.1](#)) describes professors’ responsibilities, the distinction between full-time and part-time positions, faculty evaluation criteria, and processes for reappointment and permanent appointment, termination, and grievance.

The primary responsibility of professors, according to the Plan, is “effective teaching in DRBU’s educational programs,” which extends to: 1) collective curricular and instructional oversight and innovation (“work collectively to organize and determine all instructional matters such as content, methods of teaching, learning objectives, and methods of evaluation and assessment”), and 2) discovery and integration (“make themselves as knowledgeable as possible about all aspects of the university’s programs”).

The Plan of Employment outlines what professors do, but what qualifies as “effective teaching” in DRBU’s educational model? The nature of discovery itself is one of the central concerns for DRBU. Therefore, across this integrated curriculum, texts are selected because they provide a solid foundation for understanding the ideas, values, and ethos that govern contemporary life and, therefore, shape every type of discourse and discovery. Texts are often chosen because they are embedded with sophisticated methods of deep questioning, testing, and affirming.

Texts thus selected to be part of the curriculum are not intentionally difficult, but they demand the readers’ best efforts. While professors and students alike bring to bear on the texts all the knowledge, methods and strategies of inquiry, and language and intellectual skills they each possess to make sense of and interpret the reading, this type of deep and immersive engagement is also inevitably tangled with assumptions (examined or unexamined), opinions, biases, and predispositions, which may constrain or hinder any further, broader, or deeper explorations of

these great works.

To maintain this delicate balance while maximizing direct engagement with the selected texts, a discussion-driven classroom pedagogy is chosen to couple with the curriculum. Both students and professors are challenged to use all their resources to make sense of what they are reading, while not only suspending, but also offering up their preconceived notions, views, and assumptions to be examined, modified, or even discarded through discussions and reflections.

This type of instructional model highly values students' taking initiative to push their own boundaries through direct reading of texts, asking probing questions, and participating in meaningful conversations. Further, integration is one of the defining features of DRBU's two programs and its governance. The "Toward a Classics Curriculum" section of the DRBU Catalog ([Attachment 4.2](#)) states that these two programs are integrated in that "their curricular strands are not stand-alone modules each advancing a compartmentalized area of study, but are intertwined threads (or 'strands') of a tightly woven fabric that as a whole result in a unified and requisite set of knowledge and intellectual skills." Students and professors are thus encouraged to "reference all other parts of the curriculum pertinent to the discussions and extend the circle of their conversations beyond the classroom into other parts of their lives at DRBU." To this end, DRBU emulates the practices of its peer institutions that offer programs based on a similar model to minimize reliance on specialized field expertise in learning and instruction. Therefore, the following considerations help clarify what teaching at DRBU means:

- Professors act as guides, whose primary role is to encourage and assist students in the task of inquiring and knowing for themselves, rather than serving simply as a dispenser of well-organized systems of knowledge. Therefore, professors eschew the more common role to "profess," or to interject their expertise, however well intentioned.
- Students are encouraged to draw from all parts of the curriculum in their reflections and discussions. To promote and facilitate this integrated learning across the curriculum, and because professors are not presumed to be area experts in the classes they teach, they are expected to, with appropriate training and development, teach outside of their areas of academic training.
- Because DRBU is primarily a teaching institution and demands professors to teach across the curriculum—a considerable scholarly endeavor—DRBU foregoes conventional scholarly research as a requirement. However, the university encourages and supports professors' initiatives in a wide range of scholarly activities. More discussions on scholarly activities will follow in a later section.
- Reflecting the broad and integrated nature of DRBU's degree programs, and that, in time, most professors will teach partly outside of their areas of expertise, the teaching faculty is not organized by academic departments. No professor is assigned to any one class permanently, and all professors are collectively responsible for the review, development, and revision of the curricula.

These considerations and the educational philosophy that underlies them are incorporated into the teaching faculty's review process—they are represented in three out of the five review criteria—for appointment (hiring), reappointment, and permanent appointment (tenure).

Discussions on appointment, promotion, and permanent appointment will follow in later sections.

Workload and course assignment

Full-time members of the teaching faculty are “expected to teach three to four courses per semester (approximately nine to twelve hours of classroom time).” Since the enactment of the faculty Instructions Committee (IC) in Fall 2018, the dean consults with the IC on the workload of teaching personnel, granting course reliefs for alternative duties such as administrative work, developing a new course, or learning to teach a new course. In the process of assigning courses, the dean and the IC try to balance institutional and student needs with the interests and development of the teaching personnel. In addition to teaching, the Plan of Employment lists a set of secondary responsibilities, which include areas related to student learning (provide adequate evaluation and feedback to and advise students); assessment (contribute to other instruction-related activities, such as those related to assessment); and service (serve on standing and ad hoc faculty committees and attend all required faculty functions).

Teaching Across the Curriculum

To lead discussions on texts that are beyond one’s academic preparation presents intellectual and pedagogical challenges for the teaching faculty, especially since very few people have experience with this instructional model. DRBU, and institutions that employ a similar model, recognize the teaching faculty’s work to teach courses in multiple strands of the BA program as a rigorous and important scholarly endeavor. Forgoing the requirement for disciplinary research provides some breathing room for professors to focus on learning the different parts of the curriculum. In addition, through the course assignment process, the dean and the IC use co-teaching assignments to pair professors learning to teach a new strand of courses with those with experience.

Scholarship Activities

In addition to teaching in different parts of the two programs, DRBU supports a range of other scholarly activities aiming to foster a strong culture of scholarship. The following are some highlights:

Table 4.1

Teaching seminar	Started in Fall 2018, this monthly event aimed at supporting the scholarship of teaching provides opportunities for members of the teaching faculty to lead and participate in seminars on texts; share reflections on classroom teaching and student assignments; and have discussions on topics such as the writing process and contemplative exercises.
Symposium	Started in Fall 2015, and coordinated through a faculty committee, the symposium is a series of events and activities that extend learning outside the classroom, complementing DRBU’s academic programs with activities in contemporary issues and scholarship. Symposium events include a lecture

	series by scholars and practitioners and an annual student symposium where students give a talk on a paper they write.
DRBU conferences	DRBU hosted or co-hosted two themed conferences (see Attachment 4.3 for the posters) in Fall 2016 and Spring 2019. Members of the teaching faculty, students, and scholars from other institutions presented and participated in these conferences. The 2016 conference took place at UC Berkeley and the 2019 conference at DRBU.
Support for other scholarship activities	DRBU allocates in its annual budget funds for faculty, staff, and students to attend academic and professional development conferences and workshops. These funds also go toward personal subscriptions to electronic journals for professors (by request) and funding for purchasing books and other instructional materials to develop a course or to prepare to teach one.

Teaching Faculty Survey Results and Analyses

According to the 2021 Teaching Faculty Survey, almost three quarters (73%) of the respondents stated that their workload is reasonable and sustainable (27% neither agree nor disagree). On a slightly different question, nearly two thirds (64%) of respondents agreed that the workload system at DRBU is reasonable and sustainable, while 18% disagree or strongly disagree (the remaining 18% neither agree nor disagree). These responses show that by and large the teaching personnel have a positive or neutral view toward their workload and they are more agreeable on their own workload than their view on the workload system overall. However, these levels represent a decrease from a similar survey conducted in 2017 when 100% of the respondents of the survey of teaching faculty strongly agreed or agreed that their respective workload is reasonable and sustainable.

DRBU developed its workload system for teaching personnel after carefully studying such systems in similar institutions as well as other non-R1 institutions. The following table shows the different practices of several non-R1 institutions:

Table 4.2

Institution	Course load/year	unit/course	Teach across curriculum req.	Research req.
DRBU	6 (3/3)	2-4	Yes	No
SJC	6 (3/3)	4-4.5	Yes	No
TAC	8 (4/4; 3 preps)	3	Yes	No
SMC	6 (3/3)	3.5	Some	Yes

CSU (TT faculty at 17 semester campuses)	6 (3/3; 47%); 7 (4/3; 6%); 8 (4/4; 47%)	3-5	No	Yes
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Responses to other questions in the survey point to areas worthy of attention. Two such areas related to classroom teaching are shared inquiry and teaching across the curriculum. The majority of respondents have an overall positive view of their own teaching: seven out of eleven respondents view their teaching as being of high quality (the remaining four neither agree nor disagree), and in most questions respondents tended to agree or strongly agree with positive statements about their teaching. Respondents show more ambivalence in their ability to lead shared inquiry in classroom teaching: six out of eleven respondents neither agree nor disagree that they are skilled in facilitating shared inquiry in the classroom. Of the five respondents who left written comments in this section of survey on teaching, three of them find leading shared inquiry challenging and/or request more resources (such as workshops) and support to develop their skills. Another aspect of instruction to take note of is teaching across the curriculum. Even though a healthy majority—eight out of eleven respondents (73%)—agree or strongly agree that support is sufficient for teaching across the curriculum, this is a decline from 2017 when 93% had the same sentiment.

Pairing two (or more) professors with differing levels of experience and facility in a course has been the main device for new teaching personnel to acclimate into the requirements of DRBU’s educational model: to focus on primary texts; to teach through shared inquiries centered around questions and discussions; to lead contemplative exercises; and to teach different parts of the two programs, some of which may lie outside of their formal academic training. Between 2013-2014 and 2017-2018, a higher-than-average professor-to-student ratio allowed co-teaching arrangements to take place in approximately two out of every three classes (64%). Between 2017-2018 and 2021-2022, that figure decreased to ~ 54% and in Fall 2021, the latest term of this 5-year period, only one third of classes have co-teaching arrangements.

While co-teaching is an effective method of training for professors, maintaining a high percentage of classes with more than one instructor is not a sustainable practice beyond the short term, nor is it a practice common among other similar programs. Among DRBU’s more established peer institutions, only St. John’s College maintains a practice of having more than one instructor teaching any course: the core seminar in the college’s undergraduate program, which constitutes one quarter of the program’s course offerings, is always led by two tutors. All courses in other “Great Books” colleges seem to be taught by one instructor. New tutors at all these programs seem to audit courses as a preparation for teaching, but only occasionally do these programs award course relief for such efforts.

These considerations—centered around teaching capacity—mean that the dean and the IC will mete out co-teaching assignments judiciously and work with the teaching faculty to develop other resources to support professors’ development in teaching. For example, since Fall 2018, the teaching faculty has organized a monthly teaching seminar to exchange ideas and practices on teaching. Another idea of support for teaching is forming study groups such as the Archon system used in DRBU’s peer institutions. Archons are leaders of groups of tutors teaching

different sections of the same course. They lead discussions during the semester on reading and pedagogy. In some instances, Archons are given course relief for their efforts. As enrollment in the MA and the BA programs grow to have multiple cohorts, the teaching faculty can consider solutions such as the Archon system.

Respondents also had noticeable shifts in sentiments from 2017 regarding two areas other than teaching across the curriculum: course development and scholarship activities. In 2021, only four of eleven (36%) of respondents agreed that time and resources are sufficient for course development, a significant decrease from 94% in 2017. When the two programs first launched, the teaching faculty shouldered the task of designing and creating the forty plus courses that the two new all-required programs offer. The first significant iteration of this collective feat of curricular innovation concluded in 2019 for the BA program with the graduation of the first BA cohort (and 2015 for the MA program). For approximately one third of the courses, the professors assigned to the development task received a course relief for each course. Because both programs have a common curriculum and changes require the approval of the collective teaching faculty, revisions will be more incremental, targeted, and less systemic going forward. For example, the MA program added a new course in Spring 2020 and a handful of MA and BA courses had significant revisions to their reading lists; the dean did not grant course relief for these tasks.

Finally, the majority of respondents (six of eleven, or 55%) show ambivalence (‘neither agree nor disagree’) on the support they receive for other scholarship activities such as writing and publishing; the percentage of respondents who agree that resources and time are sufficient for these scholarship activities decreased from 64% in 2017 to 9% in 2021. The following table shows the funds allocated to support different types of scholarship activities between 2018-2019 and 2021-2022. As a reference, the totals were \$25,620 and \$26,055 for 2016-2017 and 2018-2019:

Table 4.3

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Instructional Materials	3500	3500	3500	3500
Conferences	12000	14000	9000	7000
Symposium	2000	1450	950	1450
Travel	10350	9500	8650	1600
Total	\$27,850	\$28,450	\$22,100	\$13,550

The two areas that saw the biggest decrease between 2019-2020 to 2021-2022 are funds for conferences and travel expenses for conferences. Both are results of the COVID-19 pandemic. The drop in conference funding between 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 reflected a decision for DRBU not to organize a conference during the pandemic. The pandemic made virtually all conferences and workshops virtual, which allowed DRBU to temporarily decrease the budget for conference-related travel expenses, as well as for guest speakers traveling to DRBU. The university plans to restore these funds for scholarship activities as conferences and other activities return to in-person mode again.

D. Capacity

The following table shows DRBU’s active teaching personnel as of Fall 2021:

Table 4.4

Category	Professor	Asst. Professor	Instructor	Teaching Fellow	Admin Faculty	Total
Headcount (Fall21)	9	3	4	2	2	20
Teaching capacity (Fall21)	5	2.33	3	2	0.67	13

Several teaching faculty members also serve in administrative roles, and several others are teaching part-time. These conditions contribute to the discrepancy between headcount and teaching capacity. DRBU’s teaching faculty has two ranks—professors are those with a permanent appointment (akin to tenure) and assistant professors are those who haven’t yet received one. Teaching fellows are probationary appointments; DRBU hires fellows with the expectation to transition them to an assistant professor appointment upon satisfactory completion of the probationary period of one to two years. The practice of using adjunct teaching faculty is not compatible with the integrated and common curricula that the teaching faculty collectively oversees, therefore all new teaching personnel appointments are “tenured-tracked.” The university has a legacy category—“instructors”—that are not on the professor track. DRBU will not hire new teaching personnel into this legacy category; the university has developed a pathway for existing instructors to transition onto the professor track (and four out of the seven instructors are currently in that transition process) while allowing instructors who do not wish to transition to remain an instructor with regular reviews and reappointments. DRBU’s faculty governance system also allows the Dean of Academics to ask administrative faculty members to teach courses when needs arise. For example, two administrative faculty members are teaching one course each in Fall 2021.

Because DRBU’s teaching faculty are not separated by programs, and the format of the classes for the two programs are the same (small discussion-centered seminars and tutorials organized by cohort), the professor-to-student ratio for DRBU is calculated using the size of the teaching faculty and total enrollment of the two programs:

Table 4.5

Academic Year	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Enrollment	38	47	44	44	49
Teaching FTE	13.33	13.67	14	15	13
Ratio	2.85	3.44	3.14	2.93	3.77

Both enrollment and teaching capacity increased gradually between 2017 and 2021. Overall

enrollment grew by 11% from the previous two years in 2021-2022, but teaching capacity dropped by two FTE (15% decrease). As of Fall 2021, DRBU’s professor-to-student ratio of 1:4 still compares favorably with the average of 1:11 among 222 U.S. liberal arts colleges, as [surveyed by the U.S. News](#) in 2016. Another informative figure is the difference between the total number of courses that DRBU offers and its teaching capacity in terms of courses:

Table 4.6

Academic Year	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Teaching FTE	13.33	13.67	14	15	13
Course Capacity	80	82	84	90	78
Course Offered	39	49	56	53	56
Difference	41	33	28	37	22

Because professors’ primary responsibility is teaching in the two degree programs, and these two programs are both all-required and sequentially built, projecting staffing needs based on the total number of courses offered in a semester is relatively straightforward. Judging by the two indicators of professor-to-student ratio (1:4) and the “surplus” of teaching capacity (22), even as capacity relative to enrollment and number of courses offered has decreased from 2017, DRBU has more than sufficient teaching capacity for its academic programs. The current surplus of 22 courses a year (equivalent to approximately 3 2/3 FTE personnel) allows co-teaching assignments to continue as a significant training tool for teaching faculty new to DRBU and/or those learning how to teach courses outside their background. This surplus also provides DRBU with a reserve to respond to changes such as increase of the MA cohorts from one to two (2021-22), the launch of a graduate certificate program (2019-20), and sudden fluctuations in headcount (2021-22) without needing to hire new teaching faculty hastily. DRBU needs to update its teaching faculty staffing plan with one that takes into consideration enrollment growth; training of professors by co-teaching arrangements; course development; fluctuations in administrative responsibilities that might demand some professors’ time; and turnover (for example, one quarter of DRBU’s teaching personnel are age 70 or older).

Professors have somewhat unusual roles under DRBU’s educational model. Therefore, academic preparation and expertise in a specific academic discipline is not a primary criterion that DRBU uses in hiring and evaluating its professors, beyond the basic requirement of a post-baccalaureate degree. The current group (Fall 2021) of 14 active professors and teaching fellows all have advanced degrees—including ten who have earned a doctoral degree from accredited institutions—in a wide range of academic fields, such as Buddhist studies, philosophy, rhetoric, history, education, molecular biology, material science, religious studies, and South and Southeast Asian studies. Nine out of the 13 have taught at other higher education institutions. [Attachment 4.4](#) presents comparisons of the gender, ethnicity, and age diversity between the professor population and the student population. The WSCUC SAV1 reviewers found, during their March 2016 visit, that “DRBU faculty members are qualified and have the appropriate academic credentials needed to teach.”

DRBU faculty revised virtually all the major systems and processes to make them compatible to and supportive of the two new degree programs, including the process to recruit and hire new assistant professors. The teaching faculty developed and adopted a hiring process (see [Attachment 4.5](#)) in Fall 2018. In short, applicants respond to DRBU’s job post with submissions that include a cover letter, writing sample, CV, and three reference letters. The dean and the IC hold teleconferences with a select group of applicants and narrow the pool down to less than a handful of finalists. DRBU invites the finalists to visit campus for the following activities: faculty meet-and-greet; a job talk; leading a shared-inquiry seminar; and an interview with the dean and the IC. After consulting with the IC and the professors and soliciting feedback from other members of the community (administrators and staff members), the dean recommends a candidate to the president for appointment. The criteria that the dean and the IC consider in selecting a candidate are the same ones in the review process for professors (see [Attachment 4.6](#)). In Spring 2021, DRBU hired two teaching fellows, which are probationary appointments toward a permanent appointment (i.e. tenure track) following this hiring process.

DRBU has seen low turn-over in teaching faculty since 2010. All twelve active professors (including both ranks) have been with DRBU in different (teaching or administrative) capacities for at least eight years, eleven have served ten or more years and five have served for at least 20 years. Since the launch of the two degree programs, only two professors have departed (retirement and resignation). Bringing on people who understand and are committed to the mission and educational vision of DRBU is an important first step. Working toward and maintaining a livable and equitable compensation structure is also an important factor to retain faculty and staff. Currently, the university has a modest and flat salary structure. The president and a junior professor, for example, earn essentially the same salary. The WSCUC Visiting Team lauded the use of this salary structure as emblematic of an approach of leadership that “inspires integrity, high performance, appropriate responsibility, and accountability” and one that sets “the golden standards of equity.” However, the team also cautions that DRBU might have to consider changing the system to “grow and continue to attract highly qualified faculty and administrators.” For now DRBU is keeping the flat structure, but has increased the salary gradually since Fall 2019: from \$48,000 a year in 2018-2019 to \$62,400 in 2022-2023, in approximately 10% annual increments. While DRBU’s adjustments improve livability for the faculty, the salary is still modest. The dedication of faculty and staff to maintaining the current salary structure has afforded DRBU financial flexibility to continue its growth and to offer generous financial aid to its students.

B. Faculty Governance

DRBU’s teaching faculty collectively oversees the MA in Buddhist Classics, the BA in Liberal Arts, and starting in Fall 2021, the Graduate Certificate in Buddhist Translation. Therefore, the faculty governance structure for the BA program is the same one that governs the University overall.

DRBU’s faculty consists of professors and senior administrators. The faculty is delegated the authority and the responsibility to “prescribe academic curricula, to adopt and refine instructional

methods, and to carry on all of the educational and administrative functions of the University,” and has “oversight of the non-academic life on the University campus.” In other words, the faculty has plenary powers to deliberate on and make important policy decisions or set guidelines on all aspects of the University ([Attachment 4.7](#)). This sharing of governance is a practice consistent with DRBU’s vision of a collegial learning community formed around its integrated programs, and mirrors the policies adopted by several other “Great Books” colleges. This practice aims to remove the traditional divide between teaching faculty and administrators. In addition, it fosters a deeper understanding of the programs among administrators and a higher level of involvement in the university’s governance among professors. The practice has been successful in engaging the teaching faculty in university governance. In both the 2017 and 2021 Teaching Faculty Surveys, 100% of respondents agree or strongly agree that teaching faculty has an important role in governance of the University. The 2016 WSCUC SAVI Visiting Team seems to concur, as it observes that “both [teaching faculty] and administrators emphasized how the faculty/administration connection exhibits a special awareness of and sensitivity to those roles. To lose such dynamics would destroy the true spirit of the institution. This sentiment was shared across the board.” (see pg.18 of [Attachment 1.2](#))

The occasions for the faculty to exercise its plenary powers—making decisions and formulating recommendations on educational and administrative policies and guidelines—are the monthly faculty meetings. Called by the president, these meetings require a quorum of a simple majority of faculty members, with the condition that no less than a simple majority of professors is present. Although all members of the faculty deliberate on all matters, only professors can vote on matters related to instruction. *[Attachment 3.6](#) is an excerpt from the DRBU Governance Manual that describes the faculty meetings in more detail, including the process for the teaching faculty to revise the curriculum or other aspects of DRBU’s academic programs.

Between 2010 and spring 2015, the faculty met at least weekly. Many non-faculty staff members also joined in. These frequent and inclusive meetings were necessary at that time, due to the fact that design, development, and implementation of the new programs, and other aspects of the University, required a high level of collaboration and coordination across different units. However, as student enrollment increased in the years following the launch of the new programs, and faculty and staff members shifted their attention and time toward teaching and serving an increasing number of classes and students, the weekly meeting schedule involving a large number of DRBU professors, administrators, and staff became unsustainable.

Therefore, beginning in fall 2015, the faculty began to explore different meeting formats with an aim to balance the values of effectiveness, transparency, and inclusiveness with the need to have efficient and sustainable practices. The two changes in practice that made the biggest impact are the decrease in frequency of faculty meetings and the enactment of faculty committees with responsibilities delegated to them. The faculty—teaching and administrative—meet monthly instead of weekly as it was during 2010-2015. Because no classes are scheduled during that time period, other campus-wide meetings and functions can take place on Tuesdays when the faculty is not meeting. These gatherings include monthly meetings of instruction personnel (professors, instructors, and teaching fellows); monthly teaching seminars; and the occasional lectures (including job talks by prospective faculty members).

The second impactful shared governance practice is the faculty’s reliance on standing and ad hoc committees to carry out important projects and tasks, including refining and implementing a program review process; clarifying the system for teaching-faculty review; carrying out a review of the president; admitting students; improving the library; and organizing public lectures and activities. The faculty currently has six standing committees: Instruction, Admissions, Library, Symposium, Program Review, and Contemplative Exercise Immersion. Besides the creation of the Contemplative Exercise Immersion Committee to coordinate the contemplative exercise immersion week programs that are integral to DRBU’s academic programs, activating the Instruction Committee as a representative committee of the teaching faculty is an important development in DRBU’s governance. The IC serves important roles in curricular and instructional oversight and academic administration of the programs—DRBU’s faculty governance directs the Dean of Academics to consult with the IC on a wide range of issues including teaching faculty appointment and review; workload and course assignments; curricular and program revisions; and academic policy-making. The committee also plays an important role in the review and appointment of the president when the Board of Trustees initiates such proceedings.

Between 2013 and 2019, because of how small the teaching faculty was still, the Instruction Committee’s membership included all professors (of both ranks). In Fall 2019, the teaching faculty enacted the IC as a representative committee and elected three assistant professors to serve in accordance with the Faculty Governance Manual. The enactment of representative IC, along with the empowerment of and delegation of responsibilities to all committees, contribute to an improvement in transparency, communication, and efficiency in governance and academic administration at DRBU.

The reliance on committees is not without its challenges. Because professors and assistant professors are still relatively few in number (twelve in Fall 2021, but four are senior administrative leaders and, therefore, not on committees) each is serving on two and sometimes three committees. The faculty is also still trying to establish a system that provides clarity on issues such as lengths of term; staggering of term of committee members; and rotation of committee assignment.

C. Review Process for Professors

A review process for professors as part of their reappointment and permanent appointment is an important part of the DRBU Plan of Employment (see [Attachment 4.1](#)). The main features of the process outlined in the Plan of Employment is summarized in the following table:

Purpose of the process	The review provides the basis for deciding on the reappointment and permanent appointment of professors.
Who performs the review?	The Dean of Academics and the Instruction Committee.
Frequency of review	Three to four times in a professor’s first seven or so years of

	<p>full-time service at DRBU. A full-time professor receives a two-year initial appointment (or two one-year initial appointments). This initial appointment(s) is followed by a two-year, then a three-year reappointment. Each reappointment is contingent on a successful review.</p> <p>A review also precedes a professor’s permanent appointment. During a professor’s three-year appointment (typically in year five to seven of his or her service at DRBU), the Dean and the Instruction Committee initiates a review process for the professor’s permanent appointment. A professor either receives a permanent appointment at the end of the three-year appointment or is not reappointed at DRBU.</p>
<p>What are the review criteria?</p>	<p>See the Plan of Employment for the criteria’s full wording. In short, the criteria are: 1) Excellence in intellect and imagination; 2) serious engagement and commitment to DRBU’s programs; 3) competence in leading small, seminar-style classes; 4) willingness and ability to teach in all parts of DRBU’s programs; and 5) responsiveness to the needs of DRBU’s community as a civil and collegial member.</p>
<p>What about part-time professors?</p>	<p>See the Plan of Employment for the full definition of full-time workload for professors. In short, a full-time professor has 12 hours per week of classroom time (or course relief for other duties).</p> <p>Prior to permanent appointment, special one-year appointments and reappointments may be given to professors who intend to teach on a part-time basis only. Such a professor may subsequently apply for and receive a regular appointment. Special part-time appointments may then be counted on a fractional basis toward eligibility for permanent appointment.</p>

Elaboration on Review Criteria

The five review criteria were chosen when the teaching faculty was developing the review process because they strongly correspond to and reflect professors’ roles, responsibilities, and qualities, as demanded by DRBU’s programs. However, the reviewers needed to be furnished with practical guidelines, so as to apply the criteria evenly across different reviewees; doing so also improved the transparency of the review process, by providing clearer expectations.

[Attachment 4.8](#) contains the additional guidance on the review criteria that the teaching faculty adopted in April 2017. These guidelines include a short description of the criteria, how to apply

them in a review, and examples of types of evidence that demonstrate professors' accomplishments under them. Some guidelines are more refined than others (for example, guidelines on how to apply criteria one: "excellence in intellect and imagination" are less clear). These guidelines have been incorporated into the Plan of Employment as annotations (see [Attachment 4.9](#)). [Attachment 4.10](#) contains the procedure for reviews that the teaching faculty also adopted in 2017. These documents—the annotated Plan of Employment and the review procedure—which are relevant to the professors' review are accessible by the teaching faculty on an internal page of the DRBU website and paper copies have been distributed to all the professors.

Instructors

A grey area developed as a result of this period of fast and dynamic growth and transition for DRBU. In addition to permanent and non-permanent professors, another group of teaching personnel, known as instructors, teach and support student learning. The introduction of instructors into DRBU was driven by the following circumstances:

- Professors wear many hats at a small institution like DRBU, especially as the University was preparing to launch two new programs. Important tasks such as developing curriculum and governance systems for the new programs, administrative tasks, and applying for regional accreditation demand additional time from professors and led to temporary and fluctuating shortages in teaching capacity.
- DRBU's teaching faculty aimed to design the two programs' curricula so that, in time and with training and support, all professors can teach throughout both programs. However, even under that premise, certain courses will be harder for professors without a background to transition into than others. Anecdotally, the dean of St. John's College noted that Sanskrit courses offered in the college's MA in Eastern Classics are the most difficult to teach for the college's tutors who are not Sanskrit specialists. This sentiment is likely shared by DRBU professors with regards to language and math courses.
- Current instructors are people familiar with DRBU. Five out of seven have held administrative roles at DRBU, three have experience teaching in DRBU's sunsetted legacy programs, and three are recent graduates of the new MA program. Their familiarity with DRBU and its programs helps to ease their transition into assisting with teaching in the programs.

In Fall 2021, DRBU employs 3 FTE instructors (five in terms of active headcount), and these instructors appear to perform competently in their limited teaching responsibilities. However, because the instructor category did not come about by design, it does not appear in DRBU's governance documents (such as the Faculty Governance Manual and the Professor Plan of Employment). This ambiguity raises questions, including the following: Are instructors part of the teaching faculty? Can they vote on curricular matters like professors do? Are they on track to become professors and eventually eligible to receive a permanent appointment? Will they be reviewed the same way as professors? If not, what is the review process for instructors?

In considering the path forward for instructors, the teaching faculty favored the following factors. First, the teaching faculty is not divided by specialty, department, or program, and all its members share collective ownership and oversight over the common curriculum, pedagogy, and all matters related to instruction. The professors are only categorized by whether they have received permanent appointment or not. Having an additional category of teaching personnel without a path to professorship is akin to the use of adjunct faculty, which is incompatible with the integrated nature and collegiate spirit of DRBU. Second, in addition to oversight on instruction, the teaching faculty also share University governance responsibilities with senior administrators. Therefore, the hiring process and the review process for reappointment and permanent appointment for professors are necessarily rigorous. If a new category of teaching personnel were to have some or all of these powers and responsibilities, a vetting and review system equal in rigor to that of the professors needs to be in place. However, creating a separate category of instructors seems redundant if it shares the same role, responsibility, and review process with the existing category of professors.

In April 2017, the teaching faculty adopted a resolution that outlines a path forward for the instructors (see [Attachment 4.11](#)). In short:

- DRBU maintains the existing governance structure and review process outlined in the Faculty Governance Manual and the Professor Plan of Employment. The University will not establish “instructor” as a category of the teaching faculty.
- DRBU will only appoint new teaching personnels on the professor track and not as instructors.
- Research and propose a special category of teaching personnel similar to “lab directors” at DRBU’s peer institutions. The aim of this type of personnel is to facilitate professors teaching in the BA program’s science and language strands. At DRBU’s peer institutions, these personnel assist the instruction of laboratory science courses but do not teach them, and do not have the same governance responsibilities as their teaching faculty.
- Existing instructors may remain an instructor, even if there will be no new instructor appointment. The teaching faculty further adopted a procedure for reviewing and re-appointing the instructors in Fall 2019.
- Existing instructors may also apply for transition to the professor track. The teaching faculty adopted a process and a procedure for an instructor’s transition to the professor track in Fall 2019.

Implementation

DRBU has used the review system to evaluate and provide feedback on the work of professors and instructors. The system also serves to advance the professors toward permanent appointments and renewing of non-permanent appointments for professors and instructors. As of Fall 2021, four professors have been granted permanent appointment through increasingly rigorous reviews and two assistant professors are undergoing their permanent appointment review in Spring 2022. Reviews have also been carried out for assistant professors for renewal of their non-permanent appointments.

Four out of seven instructors requested to transition to the professor track and are in various

stages of the process (one has successfully made the transition thus far).

The formal review process is important and necessary for vetting the non-permanent professors for their long-term tenure at DRBU. The series of three to four reviews that professors undergo on their way to permanent appointment also provides opportunities for feedback and improvement. However, these reviews' formality (and, therefore, their demands on time and coordination) and infrequency (every two or three years) leave room for professors to receive feedback in less formal, more frequent, and more peer-based ways. This is an area worthy of attention for the community of teaching faculty to develop teaching and collegiality.

List of Attached Evidence for Section Four:

- 4.1 [Professor Plan of Employment](#)
- 4.2 [“Towards a Classics Curriculum” catalog excerpt](#)
- 4.3 [Posters from Fall 2016 and Spring 2019 Conferences](#)
- 4.4 [Comparisons of Gender, Race, and Age of Faculty and Students](#)
- 4.5 [New Professor Hiring Process Catalog Excerpt](#)
- 4.6 [Adaptation to Review Criteria for Hiring New Professors](#)
- 4.7 [Excerpts from bylaws and faculty governance manual](#)
- 4.8 [Faculty Review Proposal Summary](#)
- 4.9 [DRBU Professor plan of employment - Annotated](#)
- 4.10 [Guide to professor Review procedure - Fall 2017](#)
- 4.11 [Attachment 4.11 Proposal on the Instructor Category](#)

Section Five: Sustainable Practices

A. Admissions and Student Recruitment

Admissions

DRBU's rolling admission policy, application requirements, and other information related to admission to the BA program is published in the DRBU Catalog ([Attachment 5.1](#)) and on the University's [website](#). In summary, application requirements for the BA program are:

- Graduation (or presumption to graduate prior to enrollment) from high school.
- Completed admission application form, including essays.
- Two letters of recommendation.
- Official academic transcript(s).
- An in-person or video-conferenced interview with members of the admissions committee.
- Submission of standardized test scores (highly recommended but not required); the exception is the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), on which a minimum score of 80 iBT is required for applicants who speak English as a second language.

DRBU's admission practice aims to give careful consideration, through a non-competitive, rolling process, to each applicant, and to evaluate each applicant's qualifications to attend the BA program on their own merits. Admission decisions are made by the faculty Admissions Committee, which consists of three professors and four ex officio members—the Director of Admissions and Financial Aid, the University President, and the Deans of Academics and Students. The committee considers each application holistically, to determine whether an applicant will be successful in the BA program and will be able to contribute positively to the DRBU community. The two main criteria that Admissions Committee members consider in making a decision are: 1) the applicant's understanding of and interest in DRBU's unique educational model and campus environment, and 2) the applicant's academic readiness. In practice, both administrative and teaching faculty members are polled in making admission decisions, with the tie-breaking power residing with the professors.

Applicants who enjoy reading, and who exhibit intellectual curiosity, enthusiasm about learning, openness to stimulating dialogues, and a willingness to change their views and stance are likely to meet the first criterion. Instead of merely asking questions about these texts, students hopefully are receptive to the larger questions involved in the program's courses: how do we interpret texts; how do different traditions provide interpretive frameworks; how do we as individuals approach each other in the process of shared inquiry, and how can we expand and possibly challenge our own views and interpretive strategies?

Because the BA program is new and uses a somewhat unique educational model, Admissions Committee members have not been able to rely on a history of many graduates and students to draw precise inferences based on data in assessing any one applicant's academic readiness for the program in question and the applicant's actual understanding of and interest in DRBU's educational model. With a combination of increasing student enrollment and a higher number of graduates from which to draw data; careful tracking of application data and analyses to correlate these data with student success; and information and advice, including indicators of success from

DRBU's peer institutions, will help the Admissions Committee develop and refine its own set of success indicators for making admission decisions. To this end, the offices of Admissions, University Relations, and Institutional Research collaborate on an ongoing basis on gathering and analyzing data across students' "lifecycle" when they begin their contact with the university.

Due to the unique nature of the BA program, DRBU does not accept transfer credits from other institutions. The BA curriculum is fully integrated and built sequentially. Individual strands are not studied in isolation from each other. All students follow the same prescribed course of studies. Therefore, degree students are admitted only as first-year master's students. DRBU's transfer policy as described above can be found in the "Transfer Credits" ([Attachment 5.2](#)) and "Admissions" ([Attachment 5.1](#)) sections of its catalog.

Student Recruitment

Recruiting students has been one of the most significant challenges to the program's sustainability since its inception. On the national level, enrollment in higher education has been declining even before the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020. According to [a report](#) by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC), total student enrollment (all sectors of higher education including graduate and undergraduate) decreased on a year-to-year basis every year between 2017 to 2021 (p3). Between 2019 and 2021, all undergraduate programs in the U.S. lost over one million in student enrollment, which represents a 7% decrease (p4). Between 2015 and 2021, freshman enrollment decreased almost 20% from approximately 2.5 million to 2.1 million students (p5). Between Fall 2018 and Fall 2021, only nine out of the thirty-six majors at four-year institutions that NSCRC tracks did not have a declining enrollment, while "Liberal Arts, Sciences, General Studies, Humanities (including undeclared)" was among the bottom three, dropping nearly 20% in enrollment over that period.

There are indications, however, that this national downward trend in undergraduate matriculation may not be completely applicable to DRBU. Other "Great Books" programs like Thomas Aquinas College and St. John's College, which are DRBU's closest peers, are seemingly bucking the national trend. According to [its website](#), TAC has turned away an increasing number of applicants due to a high level of interest in its Catholic liberal arts program. In 2019, the college inaugurated an additional campus in Northfield, MA to respond to this demand. In its [2021-2022 annual report for alumni and friends](#), St John's College remarks that the Fall 2021 freshman enrollments at both campuses were the highest in more than 13 years. Finally, DRBU's projected incoming freshman per year for the next 3-5 years is such a small number (10) that DRBU's gain in recognition, increase in student-recruiting capacity, and competent implementation of its recruiting strategies will likely have the strongest impact in BA enrollment.

Another important measure of colleges' attractiveness to students is admissions yield (the percentage of applicants who choose to enroll after having been accepted). Thomas Aquinas College (at 73%) and St. John's College (at 53.5%) ranked in the top eight among U.S. liberal arts colleges in terms of admission yield. These two peers of DRBU perform well above the average admissions yield of 27.2% for liberal arts colleges overall, according to a [2021 US News report](#). For the DRBU BA program, the average yield from between 2016-2017 and 2020-2021 is 83.5%.

The following table shows the number of matriculations per year at DRBU from 2014-2021.

Table 5.1

Year (Fall)	2014/2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Matriculation	11	6	5	4	7	7	2

There are major events that may have had an impact on student recruitment. The first matriculated cohort was recruited over a two-year period and consisted largely (more than two-thirds) of students from the community of DRBU’s parent organization DRBA. In Fall 2018, the BA program matriculated its first international student after the university received WSCUC Initial Accreditation in March 2018. From March 2020 to June 2021, all DRBU instructions and operations took place remotely away from campus because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the last few years, DRBU has improved its student-recruiting capacity, which covers both the MA and the BA programs. The recruiting team began seriously investing in building its digital communications capacity in 2019, which ended up paying off well during the pandemic and the resultant suspension of in-person activities. Focusing on a digital strategy also allowed us to extend our reach to a national and international audience who might not be able to easily attend events in-person. Over the past few years, our capacity to use digital data to understand and track the interests of our potential students has gotten more sophisticated, allowing us to develop more targeted content and build our narrative and brand. Since the 2018-2019 academic year, the staff members working on recruiting increased from 3 FTE to 4.25 FTE and headcount increased from 4 people to 9 people. We have also developed relationships with contractors to assist with public relations, graphic design, and website development. To further improve the recruiting program’s capacity, we need to either convert some of our part-time staff (who tend to have a high turnover, causing loss of institutional knowledge) into full time employees, so that we can build consistency and retain skills on the in-house team over time. Alternatively, we could outsource some of these functions to specialized firms who have the relevant expertise, but this would require a very meaningful increase in our budget, whereas retaining in-house talent fits within our overall financial planning.

Brand awareness is still a major challenge for DRBU but we have seen growth in awareness and interest over the last few years, including in website traffic, lead generation, and media coverage.

Table 5.2 Website Traffic

Academic Year	Website Page Views	YoY Growth
2017-2018	74,885	
2018-2019	90,342	+21%
2019-2020	92,799	+3%

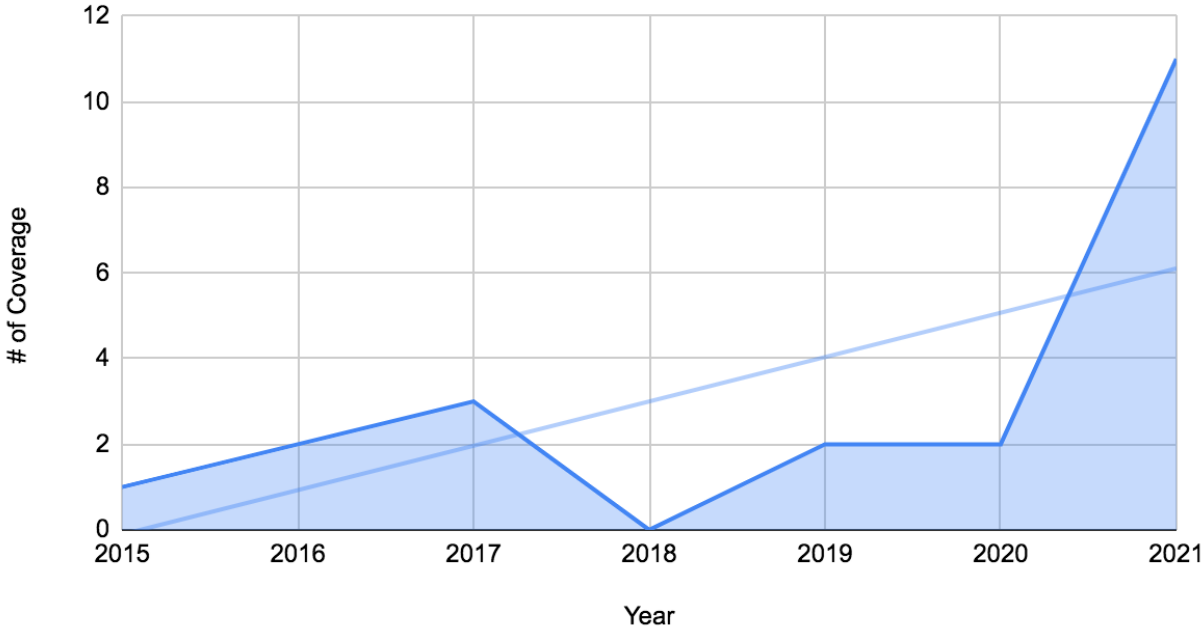
2020-2021	114,215	+26%
2021-2022	223,094	+95%

Lead Generation

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	Last Year's YoY
Request for Information	43	61	161	+170%
BA Common App Suspect	n/a	35	47	+34%
BA Common App Prospect	n/a	16	52	+225%

Graph 5.1 Media Coverage

of Coverage vs. Year



Of significant importance for the recruiting program is to develop a more nuanced understanding of our target audience so that we can use our resources in a targeted way and convert student interest into enrollments. We recently did a user persona analysis to develop a better understanding of who our target audience is, how they find us, and what their potential pain points are. Of the 14 BA students currently enrolled and the 17 who graduated (31 total), only 3 students came to DRBU directly out of high school. In the last four years, the average age of an incoming BA student has been 25 years old. Most of these nontraditional students have completed courses at either other liberal arts colleges or community colleges prior to applying to

DRBU, but come to us seeking an alternative that better fits their learning goals, such as our small and intimate community, an opportunity to study primary texts directly in a discussion-based classroom, or an atmosphere that is supportive and spiritually-minded. These students are a good fit for us, but mostly discover DRBU through their own search efforts or by word of mouth. They also have some pain points that are difficult for the university to resolve.

While our financial aid is generous and doesn't ask students to take out any loans, our students consistently face personal expenses that fall outside the reach of university aid. This is especially true for older adult students who find it difficult to support their basic financial needs while being full-time students. Second, since we are an integrated program, students cannot bring earned hours from other institutions and apply them to the completion of their BA at DRBU. Having to forgo transfer credits and complete all four years of our program is seen as a significant drawback to many of these individuals since it further delays their entering the workforce. Another pain point identified by these nontraditional students is that we do not currently have family housing facilities on campus to accommodate adult students with a spouse, partner, or children. The cost of living, especially for housing, in Northern California is very high compared to the national average, making it quite challenging for full-time students to afford off-campus housing.

The impact of these pain points on the student body can be lessened by focusing future recruiting efforts on students currently enrolled in high schools. As mentioned previously, since the BA program launched in 2014, we've had three students come to DRBU straight from high school. While this number is small, we believe that the potential high school audience offers us the best opportunity to build a scalable, repeatable, and sustainable recruiting strategy that can support our enrollment goals. One reason for this is that high school students are an established market and there are already many existing tools for marketing to their demographic that we can incorporate into our recruitment strategies. As a younger population, they are also less likely to need family housing and may have more financial support from their families which, combined with our financial aid, would make attending four years of college a manageable expense. While we will always welcome adult learners and hope they continue to make up a portion of our incoming cohorts every year, we think that by expanding our efforts directed at the high school market, we can grow our enrollment more effectively.

Because our programs are so new, another focus of our recruitment team is addressing the lack of brand awareness in our potential market. One important strategic initiative for the University is to find a good target market fit for our program within the highschool and Gen-Z demographic. We've experienced difficulty overcoming student's lack of familiarity with our school, with the idea of a core-texts program, and even with liberal art programs in general. Additionally, the increasing professionalization of higher education has had an impact on the university selection

process for these students. Research suggests that Gen-Z is highly pragmatic and thinks about college through the lens of careers and future income potential. To address this tendency, we need to offer framing that not only distinguishes DRBU from other liberal arts colleges, but also informs potential students about the value of a liberal arts education.

This ongoing work to better articulate our value proposition to Gen-Z students and their parents, will also likely need to include developing our narrative around career opportunities for our graduates post-DRBU. Our admissions counselors are frequently asked, “what do graduates do with this degree?” both by potential students and by high school counselors. As a young school, we don’t yet have a pool of distinguished alumni to cite as examples, so there is need to be creative in how we develop case studies and talk about how the skills students develop at DRBU translate into today’s workforce. Another pain point for younger students are fears around making friends within such a small student body. While this will improve as DRBU’s enrollment grows, there is work to be done increasing the number of student activities offered on campus that support students in making friends outside of their own cohort or dormitory.

B. Allocation of Resources

Student support

Student support is prevalent in both academic and non-academic programs and services. DRBU's Academic Resource Center (ARC) provides the following programs and services: tutoring services, career services, services to students with disabilities, and computer services. In addition, ARC hosts workshops for supplemental instruction as well as basic skill remediation to support student success. Workshops include topics on the writing process, reading skills, and career panels. Students are also encouraged to meet with tutors and career counselors on an individual basis as needed.

Cohort mentors (see [Attachment 3.23](#)) are teaching personnel assigned to each student cohort at the beginning of each academic year. They serve many of the same functions as a faculty adviser would in another institution. Cohort mentors typically meet with the whole cohort together and help students with their academic plans, identify particular academic challenges for individual students, and locate academic support services when appropriate. Cohort mentors also refer students’ to different student service units, depending on the type of individual concerns. The mentors also report during faculty meetings on programmatic issues and concerns discovered through their interactions with their cohorts. Students can request individual meetings with cohort mentors. Questions on cohort mentors are included in regular student surveys. Seventy one percent of respondents to the Annual Student Survey were satisfied or satisfied with cohort mentoring. Professors and instructors who serve as cohort mentors are given one unit of course relief per semester.

DRBU is committed to supporting student success with appropriate campus life services and other support services. Because of the residential nature of DRBU’s two programs, students’ life on campus is an important part of their DRBU experience. New Student Orientation is the first

on-campus programming that new students encounter to help them transition to their life on campus and as a student. Campus Life units that are vital for students' primary support in non-cognitive variables of success include residential life, dining services, health services (which include mental health wellness and psychological interventions). Campus Life units that additionally support engagement in the campus community are service scholarship (work-study), spiritual life, student activities.

These student support programs and activities undergo a cyclic review process. The following areas have been included for this review process: new student orientation, residential life, and spiritual life. Each unit promotes student success through helping with students transition to life on campus, non-cognitive support, and support for community involvement.

Financial support plays a crucial role in enabling students to attend and be successful at DRBU. DRBU offers generous financial aid to its BA students: 100% of the current BA students receive financial aid and no students have taken out loans to attend DRBU thus far. (see the later section on financial resources for details).

Information and technology resources

The nature of discovery itself is one of DRBU's central concerns. Students examine the theoretical frameworks and interpretive strategies that shape how we process and interpret information and experience, and ask the key question: "How do we know what we know?" Many texts are selected for the curriculum because they provide a solid foundation for understanding the ideas, values, and ethos that govern contemporary life and therefore shape every type of discourse and discovery. Texts are often chosen also because they are embedded with sophisticated methods of deep questioning, testing, and affirming.

DRBU's second ILO helps define the expectations for discovery for DRBU professors and students:

A liberally educated person will appreciate the methods of inquiry and insights suggested by the primary texts, particularly in the study of human nature, the workings of causality, and the complex interconnections among the personal, the social, and the natural worlds.

DRBU does not expect (though it does welcome and encourage) the scholarly activities of discovery for students and teaching faculty to go beyond primary texts, mainly those included in the two all-required curricula.

The university library (see [Attachment 5.3](#)) has been in existence since DRBU's founding in 1977. In that period of time, the library has amassed over 50,000 volumes, which mainly supported the six DRBU legacy degree programs that have since been sunsetted. Though the library's current collection had not been procured to specifically support DRBU's new primary-source-based degree programs, its large collection of Chinese and Sanskrit language, Buddhist, Chinese, and Indian classical texts are good resources for Chinese and Sanskrit language study and translation, important activities in the new programs.

The university library was relocated to the ground floor of the new university building in fall 2017. This new location currently hosts up to approximately 17,000 volumes (with another 20,000 volumes available for circulation but shelved off-site), along with study space and offices for library staff. This relocation provides an opportunity for the library staff to gather from the existing collection books that most directly support the two new programs. This reorganization will make the library collection more manageable for the current small library staff, and help to identify gaps in the collection so as to inform ongoing procurement efforts. With approximately 37,000 items in circulation and based on the projection of 80 total students on campus in 2024-2025, DRBU will have a student-to-volume ratio of 1:463. This ratio is comparable to those of accredited institutions offering similar types of programs. In 2010, for example, St. John's College, in Annapolis, Maryland, had 184.08 books, serial backfiles, and other paper materials per FTE student; Thomas Aquinas College had 175.61; and St. Mary's College of California, 76.13, according to the [National Center for Education Statistics' Library Statistics Program](#).

Purchasing decisions for both the library and the reading room are driven by the needs of the university's programs, and are overseen by the faculty Library Committee (see [Attachment 5.4](#)). The Library Committee, which consists of three university professors (as voting members) as well as the University President, Dean of Academics, and DRBU librarian (as ex-officio members), also directs the development of the library collection. This committee interacts with university professors to ensure that the collection is serving their needs as DRBU's coursework is developed and refined.

The university library has the following hours:

Mondays – Fridays : 8:00 am –11:00 am / 2:00 pm — 5:00 pm

Saturdays : Closed

Sundays : 8:00 am –11:00 am / 3:15pm — 5:00 pm

The heart of DRBU's learning activities are its open and direct discussions of primary texts. The most advanced forms of technology needed in class are (with a few exceptions, such as a projector used in language courses), pens, paper, and books. DRBU leaves to the discretion of each class's professor whether to allow use of electronic devices (such as e-readers) in class, a policy published in the catalog (see [Attachment 5.5](#)). In Fall 2021, NEAT bars, video conferencing devices, were purchased and installed in most of the classrooms to ensure the quality of hybrid classes, in which some participants join classes remotely.

DRBU's teaching faculty has determined that its educational programs require general-use personal computers (PC) with software for Internet access and email; productivity (word processing, spreadsheet, presentation softwares); language learning; and library resources search and, in the case of online holdings, access.

Currently, DRBU has available for student use several computer clusters, with a total of 9 PCs equipped with such software. These computer clusters are also equipped with printers. Given

DRBU's relatively low enrollment projection for year 2024-2045 (i.e. 80 students) and the prevalence of computer ownership among today's students, the faculty anticipates that the 9 workstations should be sufficient to meet students' needs for the upcoming academic years. DRBU intends to expand its computer capacity as its student enrollment grows.

The computer clusters in the university buildings are open during the same hours as the building, from 7 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. daily. The clusters in the dormitories are open 24 hours a day. Training on the university's computing resources is available during new student orientation and by appointment through the Office of Campus Life. The university buildings also provide wireless Internet access, which students can make use of through their personal laptops.

The WSCUC Visiting Team noted that DRBU's library "meets the needs of the faculty and student populations especially in light of DRBU's curricular emphasis on the Great Books and professors' expectations that students focus on primary texts, not secondary resources." Overall, the students view the information resources positively, as shown in the following highlights from the results of student survey (2019-20):

- 100% of the respondents were satisfied with the IT Services.
- 82% of the respondents rated the library holdings "excellent" or "good."
- 83% of respondents rated the library services "excellent" or "good."
- 83% rated the library facilities "excellent" or "good."

Library staff will use the relocation of the main library to the new university building as an opportunity to improve the library as a study area. Similarly for the new computer clusters in the new university building.

Due to the pandemic, the entire university switched to online learning during Spring 2020. In the Annual Survey (2020-21), we specifically asked students to rate the IT support received from DRBU faculty and staff. 73% of the respondents rated it as "excellent" or "good." 27% of the respondents said that they were self-sufficient and didn't need any technical support.

Facilities

DRBU operates on the campus of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas (CTTB) in Ukiah, California. The campus is owned by DRBU's parent, DRBA, free and clear, without legal encumbrances. Several major buildings have been designated to support the University's education programs. The ongoing and generous financial support from its parent DRBA includes use of a well-equipped campus, which houses classrooms, offices, dormitories, and a library (see [Attachment 5.6](#), the DRBU Charter, and [Attachment 5.7](#), the letter of support from the governing board of DRBA, both of which affirmed the long-term and continuing support of DRBU by DRBA). The BA and the MA programs share all of the current DRBU facilities.

[Attachment 5.8](#) shows DRBU's facility capacity grouped by functions as of 2021-2022. The opening of the renovated main university building south wing (labeled "Building 123" or "B123" on the DRBU campus map; see [Attachment 5.9](#)) in fall 2017 has triple the number of classrooms, offices, meeting rooms, library reading rooms, student lounges, and computer rooms. In 2021, DRBU completed renovation on a new wing of the women's dormitory, doubling the capacity for

female students.

According to the surveys, a large majority (90%) of students view the classrooms positively. However, 60% of them rated study and community spaces as “fair,” “poor,” or “very poor.” The significantly increased capacity in library reading rooms, student lounges, and meeting rooms will go a long way toward addressing students’ concerns on study and common spaces.

According to the 2019-2020 Annual Student Survey, a large majority (92%) of students view the classrooms, study and community spaces positively.

In spring 2014, DRBU created the administrative faculty position of Director of Campus Planning and Design, to coordinate DRBU’s facility projects. In addition to interacting with external contractors such as architects and construction companies, this director also participates in CTTB’s overall campus master planning process, in order to coordinate DRBU’s facility projects with those of the rest of the CTTB campus. The director provided steady leadership in the prompt and under-budget renovation of the 27,000-square-foot main building south wing, which will be instrumental in accommodating DRBU’s enrollment growth for at least five to ten years.

Staff

Excluding the faculty committees, the following administrators and support staff are responsible for the administration of the academic programs:

- Dean of Academics
- Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
- Associate Dean of Program Development
- Administrative Assistant

An excerpt of the Faculty Governance Manual ([Attachment 5.10](#)) has descriptions for the three administrators, and the assistant provides general support in the Office of Academic Affairs. The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs has oversight over the Academic Resource Center (ARC; see the *Student Support* section above). That office's coordinator and administrator provide services to students with disabilities, as well as career services.

Given DRBU’s current small size, many employees wear multiple hats. For example, the dean, and the two associate deans are also professors. and the ARC coordinator and the academic administrative assistant also provide support to other operations such as admissions and the registrar. Currently, these responsibilities account for 1 2/3 FTE personnel.

The administrators in the office have used the resources budgeted by DRBU to attend training workshops in a wide variety of areas, such as assessment methods, program review, regulation compliance, restorative justice, sexual-harassment awareness and prevention, student information systems, and accreditation.

DRBU uses a simple procedure that provides an opportunity for administrators and support staff to discuss their workload and job responsibilities with supervisors before those are finalized ([Attachment 5.11](#)). DRBU has also piloted a review process for administrative personnel, which began in spring, 2015 ([Attachment 5.12](#)). The review begins with a self-reflection from a staff member, and concludes with a review conducted by a panel consisting of the staff member's supervisor and a peer reviewer of the member's choice. The process asks the staff member to consider how his or her work aligns with DRBU's mission and how effectively his or her responsibilities have been fulfilled. The process also invites the staff member to provide feedback on how DRBU can support the staff member's work and development.

The long-serving administrative assistant retired in Spring 2020. Currently, the administrative assistant roles are filled by entry-level, part-time fellows. To support senior administrators and respond to the increasing workload that corresponds with enrollment growth, DRBU will continue to monitor the demand for administrative assistance and evaluate the need to increase capacity and/or a more permanent personnel.

Financial Resources

[Attachment 5.13](#) contains the DRBU operating budget for academic years 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22, as well as the projected budget for the two subsequent academic years. DRBU currently offers two degree programs and one certificate program, and because it has a single faculty and integrated operation, it is difficult to separate expenditure by program. The DRBU budget has shown consistency with its educational purpose and objectives. Expenditure under the instructional and academic support categories account for the largest percentage (38%) of the total budget in 2021-22. This is a reflection of the investment made by DRBU in having a higher-than-needed professor-to-student ratio to support and develop the academic programs.

In addition to the use and maintenance of a campus and its facilities, DRBU receives persistent and generous financial support from its parent organization, DRBA. This includes a grant that DRBU applies for yearly in order to support its operations. Because of this support, DRBU has never operated with a deficit since its inception in 1976. Moving forward, the DRBU Board of Trustees has made a long-term financial commitment based on the recommendation of the WSCUC Eligibility Review Committee to diversify its sources of revenue. The University board has committed to a ten-year, \$30 million fundraising campaign, and has been actively recruiting new members who have the experience and capacity to assist in that campaign. Moreover, DRBU has consistently met its annual fundraising goals for its Annual Fund for the past 10 years. The Annual Fund goal for 2021-22 is \$600,000.

The ample financial support from DRBA and university donors allows DRBU to offer robust financial support to its students. DRBU offers generous financial aid to its BA students, which reflects the DRBU intention to foster socioeconomic diversity within its student population. For instance, DRBU has been welcoming international students since 2018. In 2021-22, 3

international students enrolled in the BA program, joining us from Canada, China, and Sri Lanka. DRBU extends comparable financial aid to both its international and domestic students. In the three years, all BA students (100%) received some form of financial aid. Moreover, no BA students were asked to take on student loans as a portion of their financial aid award meaning all BA students graduate without any student loan debt.

[Attachment 5.14](#) presents a summary of financial aid for BA students from 2017 to 2022. Total income from tuition and fees for the BA program is \$73,000 in 2021-22. This represents 28% of the tuition income from the degree programs. BA program net tuition and fees average around \$95,000 for the last 5 years. Average financial aid per person has been increasing steadily from \$17,500 in 2018-19 to \$22,000 in 2021-22. Then net tuition and fees received is \$5,200 per student in 2021-22. DRBU has not increased its BA tuition (\$21,000 per year) and room and board fees (\$7,000 per year) in recent years.

The total enrollment in the BA program was the highest in 2018-19, with 23 students. The BA enrollment has declined in recent years, to 14 students in 2021-22. BA enrollment is expected to increase as the pandemic situation improves and international travel resumes. Based on the net tuition and fees received from students over the last several years, however, DRBU does not expect this to significantly increase the total income from the BA program in the short term. Fees and tuition may become a more significant source of revenue as DRBU takes measured steps to increase enrollment in the BA program in the next three to five years.

As an accredited institution, DRBU is eligible to participate in federal student financial aid programs, which offers a potential source of future revenue that DRBU has not included in its current financial projections. If DRBU decides to participate in the federal financial aid program, tuition and fees will likely account for a higher percentage of our revenue due to aid from the federal programs. In August 2019, DRBU received approval to participate in the Federal Student Financial Aid Programs as an “Eligibility Only” institution. This means that DRBU students may defer their student loans from previous institutions while attending DRBU.

List of Attached Evidences for Section Five:

- 5.1 [Excerpt from Catalog - Admissions](#)
- 5.2 [Excerpt from Catalog - Transfer Credits](#)
- 5.3 [Excerpt from Catalog - The University Library](#)
- 5.4 [Excerpt from Faculty Governance Manual - Standing Committees & Administrative Council](#)
- 5.5 [Excerpt from Catalog - Policy on Digital Devices](#)
- 5.6 [DRBU Charter](#)
- 5.7 [Letter of Support from DRBA](#)
- 5.8 [Facility Capacity 2021-22](#)
- 5.9 [DRBU Campus Map](#)
- 5.10 [Description of Responsibilities of Administrative Faculty](#)

- 5.11 [Admin Staff Workload Form](#)
- 5.12 [Staff Review Form](#)
- 5.13 [Operating Budget and Projected Budget](#)
- 5.14 [DRBU Financial Aid Profile](#)