

Dharma Realm Buddhist University  
**Presidential Review Report**

Evaluation of President Susan Rounds

Prepared by the Faculty and Trustee Presidential Review Committees  
Spring 2022

## INTRODUCTION

### **DRBU Institutional Context**

Dharma Realm Buddhist University (DRBU) was established in 1976 by the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association (DRBA; a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation) and its founder Master Hsüan Hua, a monastic reformer and widely considered the first Chinese master to teach Buddhism to large numbers of Westerners. The intent behind the university's founding was to help advance Master Hua's and DRBA's educational mission: to reanimate the spirit of Buddhist learning and practices in the contemporary world. DRBU operates primarily on the spacious grounds of The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas (CTTB) and the Sudhana Center in Ukiah, California. CTTB is a multi-use residential campus that also houses a monastery, a nunnery, and a K-12 school with a WASC-accredited high school division. Situated three miles away from CTTB in downtown Ukiah, the Sudhana Center is a former convent of the Order of Albertum and hosts student dormitories and activity spaces for DRBU.

Between 1977 and 1984, DRBU operated with the authorization status granted by the California Postsecondary Education Commission. DRBU obtained State of California Approval in 1984 for degrees in Buddhist Study and Practice (BA, MA, and PhD), Buddhist Education (MA), Chinese Studies (BA), and Translation of Buddhist Texts (BA, MA, and PhD). DRBU has maintained state approval in these four areas, with two significant changes: in 1994, the university terminated its doctoral-level degree programs to focus on serving primarily as a teaching institution, and it renamed its Translation of Buddhist Texts programs as "Translation and Language Studies."

In 2010, the university undertook a self-study to examine its objectives and develop a strategy to broaden its reach to a more diverse set of students and to consider pursuing regional accreditation. The 2010 self-study helped to reaffirm and interpret the university's mission and to lay out a roadmap that DRBU will follow in realizing its long-term educational vision. The results of this campus-wide effort include the creation of two new academic programs—a BA in Liberal Arts and an MA in Buddhist Classics—and a strong commitment to attaining regional accreditation under the WASC Senior Commission of Colleges and Universities (WSCUC). These two degree programs differ from DRBU's legacy programs and the large majority of degree programs in that they are in a family of resemblance that is commonly referred to as the "Great Books" model with the following (not exhaustive) distinctive features: all-required and sequentially-built curriculum; strong focus on classical primary texts (instead of secondary writings); and professors acting as advanced learners in multiple curricular strands and teach through questions and discussions instead of as experts in their respective fields and teaching through lectures. DRBU's contribution to the "Great Books" family of resemblance is the integration of a contemplative component into the curriculum of classical texts as an additional hermeneutical tool in the students' "pursuit of wisdom." Together with its bucolic Northern California location and adjacency to a Buddhist monastery, the two degree and the certificate programs offer students a rigorous, serene, and reflective learning experience that is unique to DRBU.

In Fall 2013, DRBU matriculated the inaugural class of students in the MA in Buddhist Classics program (the launch of the new BA took place in Fall 2014). In Fall 2021, DRBU added a graduate certificate program in Buddhist Texts Translation. In Spring 2015, the first academic year when DRBU had students in both of the two new degree programs, the university had ten MA and six BA students. In Spring 2022, those figures have increased to twenty MA, fourteen BA, and four certificate students (all figures are for full-time enrollment).

In Fall 2013, DRBU [was granted eligibility](#) to pursue WSCUC Candidacy and Initial Accreditation by the WSCUC Eligibility Review Committee (ERC) based on the new BA in Liberal Arts and MA in Buddhist Classics. DRBU also began to sunset the six existing BPPE-approved degree programs, which was completed in 2015. In March 2018, the WASC Senior Commission granted DRBU Initial Accreditation after two Seeking Accreditation Visits in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

In March 2020, DRBU moved all instruction online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to ongoing health and safety concerns stemming from the pandemic, the university received an emergency waiver from WSCUC for the 2022-2023 academic year to conduct all synchronous instructions online. Throughout this phase of remote learning, DRBU kept a small residential bubble for students with housing needs to remain on campus. DRBU resumed in-person instructions by and large (with a few classes remaining online because of high-risk populations) since Fall 2021. While the pandemic presented challenges in all facets of DRBU's operations and significantly impacted incoming freshman enrollment for Fall 2021, the university persisted well through it. In 2022-2023, DRBU has a total FTE enrollment of 43: fifteen students in the BA program; twenty-three in the MA program and five in the Translation Certificate program.

### **Background of the President**

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

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

Subject to the oversight of the Board of Trustees and such supervisory powers as may be given by the Board of Trustees to the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, the President shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the University and shall have general

supervision, control, and direction of the affairs, the Faculty, the administration, and education policies of the University.

In Spring 2017, the Board of Trustees approved a motion that the DRBU president have a 5-year renewable term and that the board will conduct a comprehensive review of the president in the fourth year of each term. In June 2021, the Board of Trustees also approved an annual component in response to the 2013 WSCUC recommendation.

President Rounds' current term started in Fall 2017 and a comprehensive presidential review was originally scheduled to be completed by Spring 2021. Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Board of Trustees extended Dr. Rounds' term for one year. Therefore, the comprehensive review started in the Fall term and concluded in Fall 2022, before the final year (2022-2023) of Dr. Rounds' current term.

### REVIEW PROCESS AND PROCEDURES

The WSCUC SAV2 Team commented on the overall presidential review process that DRBU used for its 2017 presidential review. Heeding the WASC Commission's recommendation to increase trustee involvement in the review process even further, the trustee Presidential Review Committee made the following changes to the review procedure, and they are shown in comparison to the 2017 procedures:

	2017	2022
1	The Chair of the DRBU Board of Trustees appointed a trustee Presidential Review Committee (PRC) of five <b>independent</b> members.	Same as 2017
2	DRBU's teaching faculty appointed a faculty Presidential Review Committee of five members.	Same as 2017
3	The Chairs and several members of both trustee and faculty review committees met in September 2016 to discuss the logistics of carrying out the review, as well as the review criteria and instruments.	During the October 2021 board meeting, trustees reviewed presidential review procedures and practices from 2017 and provided feedback and suggestions on revision to the trustee PRC members.
4	The Faculty PRC developed the following components of the review process, with the support of the ALO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Evaluation criteria for the review (<a href="#">Attachment CFR3.7.6</a>)</li> <li>● Review Procedure (<a href="#">Attachment</a></li> </ul>	Later in October 2021, the trustee PRC met with the ALO and IR staff to discuss revisions to review procedure and practices while consulting sources such as Association of Governing Boards (AGB) publications and criteria from other

	<p><a href="#">CFR3.7.6</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruments for gathering evidence: Presidential Review Survey Questions (<a href="#">Attachment CFR3.7.7</a>) and Self-Assessment Form for the President (<a href="#">Attachment CFR3.7.8</a>)</li> <li>• Presidential Review Report Template (<a href="#">Attachment CFR3.7.9</a>).</li> </ul> <p>The two review committees unanimously adopted these components of the review process.</p>	<p>institutions. The trustee PRC finalized revisions in early November 2021. (See <a href="#">Attachment 1</a> for a side-by-side comparison that reflects the changes)</p> <p>The IR staff made revisions to the instruments—Attachment 2 the presidential review survey and Attachment 3 the self-assessment form—to accord with the updated review criteria and to improve them based on experience from 2017.</p> <p>The faculty PRC met in December 2021 with the ALO and IR staff to receive the updated review criteria from the trustee PRC and to approve the updated instruments.</p>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The faculty review committee communicated with President Rounds on the review procedure and instruments.</li> <li>• The survey was distributed.</li> <li>• President Rounds returned the self-assessment form.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On behalf of both the trustee and the faculty PRCs, the associate director of IR communicated with President Rounds on the revised review criteria, procedure and instruments.</li> <li>• The survey was distributed in January 2022.</li> <li>• President Rounds returned the self-assessment form.</li> </ul>
6	<p>Forty-six out of 80 students, faculty, staff, and trustees, and alumni who received the survey responded by the deadline in December 2016.</p>	<p>Fifty eight out of one hundred students, faculty, staff, and trustees, and alumni who received the survey responded by the deadline in February 2021.</p>
7	<p>The ALO and IR staff provided support to the faculty review committee in compiling and analyzing the evidence and in drafting the report.</p>	<p>The same as 2017</p>
8	<p>The faculty PRC finalized the Presidential Review Report, including its findings and recommendations, and recommended it to the Trustee Presidential Review Committee.</p>	<p>The faculty PRC finalized and submitted the draft of the Presidential Review Report, including its findings and suggested recommendations, to the trustee PRC.</p>
9	<p>The trustee PRC reviewed the report submitted by the faculty PRC and adopted it after adding one recommendation while</p>	<p>The trustee PRC interviewed the president as the last instrument for the review in August 2022.</p>

	modifying another.	The trustee PRC finalized the presidential review report, including findings, commendations, and recommendations, by adopting, refining, and adding to those from the faculty PRC.
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Trustee Presidential Review Committee submitted the Presidential Review Report to the Board of Trustees.</li> <li>• The Board of Trustees unanimously adopted the Presidential Review Report including its findings, commendations, and recommendations for President Rounds.</li> <li>• The chairperson of the Board and the chairperson of the Trustee Presidential Review Committee communicated the results of the review to President Rounds, including the final Presidential Review Report.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Trustee Presidential Review Committee submitted the Presidential Review Report to the Board of Trustees.</li> <li>• The Board of Trustees voted to adopt the Presidential Review Report including its findings, commendations, and recommendations for President Rounds in October 2022.</li> <li>• The chairperson of the Board and the chairperson of the Trustee Presidential Review Committee communicated the results of the review to President Rounds.</li> </ul>

In steps 3 and 4, the trustees provided more leadership in the 2022 review (than in 2017) by 1) soliciting feedback from the whole board (instead of from the faculty PRC as in 2017) and 2) by taking on the task of developing and updating the review criteria (instead of refining and adopting what the faculty PRC submitted as in 2017). The 2022 review also added a trustee PRC interview with the president as a final instrument before the trustee PRC finalized and submitted their findings, commendations, and recommendations to the entire board of trustees. These are specific measures to increase trustee leadership and involvement in the presidential review process.

**Organization**

The DRBU Bylaws list the powers and duties of the members of the Board in Article 2, Section 3. One of the responsibilities of the Board is to review the President’s performance. This responsibility is delegated to a committee of the Board of Trustees, as outlined in Article 3, Section 7<sup>1</sup>. The Presidential Review Committee, appointed by the Chairperson of the Board, is

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<sup>1</sup> (iv) When the Board of Trustees initiates a review of the President by establishing a Trustees Presidential Review Committee, the Instruction Committee shall appoint a Faculty Presidential Review Committee comprising five members of the Faculty, of which one shall be a member of the Administrative Faculty, to perform the review of the President. This Faculty Presidential Review Committee shall report its findings to the Trustees Presidential Review Committee for it to make a report to the Board of Trustees as a whole. In the case that the Board of Trustees initiates the review to consider the President’s reappointment, the Faculty Presidential Review Committee shall also make a recommendation to its Trustee counterpart committee on whether the President shall be reappointed.

to consist of five members who are not also members of the faculty of the University. The Bylaws also state that the committee is to review the President in consultation with a Faculty Review Committee appointed by the Faculty Instruction Committee.

Because the President is ultimately accountable to the Board, yet is also a member of the Faculty of the University, the review of the President's performance is a collaborative process conducted jointly by the Trustee and the Faculty Presidential Review Committees:

- The Board Trustee determines the criteria and the procedure by which the president is reviewed.
- The Faculty committee implements the review as determined by the Trustee committee.
- The Faculty committee reports the results of review to the Trustee committee.
- The Trustee Committee reviews the results and recommend to the Board of Trustees a course of action:
  - Whether to reappoint the president for another term.
  - If so, what goals should the president work toward and in what ways should the president improve in the new term.

### **Participation**

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

Members of the Faculty Presidential Review Committee: Lauren Bausch, Wayne Chen, Shari Epstein, Kien Po, and Jin Jr Shi.

### **Evaluation Timeline**

The Chair of the DRBU Board of Trustees appointed a Trustee Presidential Review Committee of five members in October 2021, in accordance with Article 3, Section 7 of the DRBU Bylaws. As prescribed by the Bylaws, none of the committee members were also part of the Faculty of the University. The Dean and the Faculty Instruction Committee and appointed a Faculty Presidential Review Committee of five members, one of which was a non-teaching Faculty, in accordance with Section 6.a of the DRBU Faculty Governance Manual.

On October 23, 2021, the Trustee Presidential Review Committee had their first meeting to share feedback on the existing presidential review procedure and criteria from the last review. As a result, the committee made a small number of substantive and wording revisions with the support of the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) and the IR Office.

On December 13, 2021, the finalized review procedure and criteria were presented to the faculty committee for them to carry out the review. Based on the updated procedure and criteria, the IR office proceeded to refine the instruments including the Presidential Review Community Feedback Survey, the President's Self-Assessment Form, and Board's Interview Questions for the President.

On December 14, 2021, the Faculty Presidential Review Committee had their first meeting. The Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) and the IR Office provided staff support to the Faculty Presidential Review Committee in carrying out the review process.

The Presidential Review Community Survey was distributed on January 15, 2022, and submissions were received through March 6, 2022. The President's Self-Assessment Form was completed and returned on January 28, 2022.

The IR Office finished compiling and analyzing the survey data on June 6 and presented the findings and a draft presidential review report to the Faculty Presidential Review Committee in September. In its September 16 2022 meeting, The faculty PRC resolved to recommend that President Rounds be appointed for another 5-year term. The faculty PRC also drafted the commendations and recommendations and resolved to adopt the presidential review report that the IR Office prepared. The faculty PRC referred the report and its resolutions to the trustee PRC.

The trustee Presidential Review Committee convened on September 24 2022. It resolved to recommend to the Board of Trustees to reappoint President Rounds for an additional 5-year term beginning July 1, 2023. It also adopted the presidential review report referred to by the faculty PRC, including the commendations, recommendations. The trustee PRC added a condition to the report (see p 24 of this report).

## **Instrument**

### *Presidential Review Process Components*

#### [Attachment 4](#)

### *Presidential Review Community Feedback Survey*

The Presidential Review Community Feedback Survey was designed in three sections corresponding to the priorities outlined in the review criteria: Vision and Mission; Effectiveness; and Financial Sustainability. Each section contained several specific statements regarding the President's performance for the respondent to rate, from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly disagree," with an option for "I don't have enough information to evaluate this." for some questions. This made it possible to distribute the same survey to all constituents: faculty, staff, students, trustees, and alumni. Each question or cluster of questions also contained two comment boxes - one for commendations and the other for recommendations - for the respondent to leave comprehensive and detailed feedback. The survey concluded with an opportunity to write in summative remarks.

Based on the feedback from the last presidential review, that the survey was too long and the number of options (seven) was too many, two major changes were made to the survey: a. A new set of questions were created based solely on the updated review criteria: 28 multiple-choice questions and 21 free-responses questions (a "Commendations" comment box



and a “Recommendations” comment box for each of the ten sub-criterias and one final comment/feedback question). As a result, the survey was shortened almost by half without compromising its quality to collect rich data since every question was precisely based on one of the review criteria. b. The number of options for all the multiple-choice questions was reduced from seven to five or six, which made the questions much easier to respond to.

[Attachment 2](#) contains the survey used for this review.

#### *President’s Self-Assessment Form*

The self-assessment form asked the President to evaluate her performance in general based on the updated criteria. Based on the feedback received from the last review, the form was shortened and it still covers all relevant information. A final question that asks the president about succession planning was also added. [Attachment 3](#) contains the current self-assessment template used for this review.

#### *Interview Questions for the President*

[Attachment 5](#)

## **RESULTS: SURVEY AND SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM**

### **President’s Self-assessment Form**

Please refer to [Attachment 6](#) for the President’s self-assessment.

### **Categories of Survey**

[Attachment 7](#) is a report of the aggregated survey responses. An excel spreadsheet of the raw data is available in [Attachment 8](#).

The survey is organized into the following categories:

- Vision & Mission
  - Commitment to University mission and vision
  - Long-term vision and planning
  - Integrity
- Effectiveness
  - Leadership
  - Board Relations
  - Administrative/Managerial skill and ability
  - Communication skills and social intelligence
  - Student stewardship
- Financial sustainability
  - Fiscal management
  - Development

## Affiliations of Survey Respondents

Faculty: 19

Staff: 10

Student: 20

Trustee: 14

Alumnus/Alumna: 12

Total respondents: 57

Note: The number of respondents in each category does not add up to 57 because some respondents reported more than one affiliation with the University.

### Area 1. Vision & Mission

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

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

Based on Table 1, the community views Dr. Rounds' performance favorably in this area with positive ratings ranging from 86% to 98%. The top themes emerged from the responses under "Commendations" are: a. committed to mission and vision, b. embodies mission and vision in her actions, c. caring and compassionate, and d. High moral character in general. For "Recommendations", the most recurring theme is "More focus on long term vision and planning is needed."

Table 1.

Area 1: Vision and Mission
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Commitment to University mission and vision</li><li>● Long-term vision and planning</li><li>● Integrity</li></ul>
Multiple-choice responses

Statement: President Rounds...	Positive	Neutral	Negative
...has a clear understanding of the mission and vision of the University.	56 (98%)	1 (2%)	0
...passionately embodies the spirit of them in her actions.	50 (89%)	5 (9%)	1 (2%)
...has a coherent vision of the University's preferred future, takes initiative to build on that vision through strategic plans, and actively promotes useful innovation and change.	49 (86%)	6 (11%)	2 (3%)
...is able to balance the demands of the present with visions for possible alternative futures by taking into account emergent circumstances.	52 (91%)	5 (9%)	0
...displays high moral character, consistently makes ethical choices regardless of the immediate outcome, and reflects the mission and values of the university in their decisions.	53 (93%)	4 (7%)	0
Open-ended responses (coded and grouped)			
Commendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Committed to mission and vision (12)</li> <li>2. Embodies mission and vision in her actions (13)</li> <li>3. Has a clear understanding of the mission and vision (3)</li> <li>4. Articulates mission and vision (5)</li> <li>5. Strategically makes long-term plans (7)</li> <li>6. Responds well to emergent circumstances (4)</li> <li>7. Supports others in long-term vision and planning (3)</li> <li>8. Maintains a long-term vision (5)</li> <li>9. "Integrity" specifically stated (11)</li> <li>10. Caring and compassionate (16)</li> <li>11. High moral character in general (12)</li> <li>12. "honest/honesty" specifically mentioned</li> <li>13. positive/optimistic (5)</li> <li>14. "inspiring" specifically stated (6)</li> <li>15. Service-minded (6)</li> <li>16. role model (5)</li> </ol>		
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More focus on long term vision and planning is needed (8)</li> <li>2. More focus on planning for long-term success of students (2)</li> </ol>		

## Area 2. Effectiveness

### 2.1 Leadership

Based on Table 2.1, most of the community (93% & 95%) views Dr. Rounds' leadership quite positively. In the Commendations section, more than ten respondents described Dr. Rounds as being committed to achieving goals even through setbacks and an exemplary leader. Many also highlighted her non-authoritarian/collaborative leadership style.

Table 2.1

Area 2.1 Leadership			
Multiple-choice responses			
Statement: President Rounds...	Positive	Neutral	Negative
...embodies the authority and attitudes necessary to carry out her responsibilities.	53 (93%)	3 (5%)	1 (2%)
...demonstrate such qualities as steadfast commitment to goals, an ability to achieve those goals even in the face of setbacks, and a pronounced passion for maintaining and improving the welfare of DRBU.	54 (95%)	3 (5%)	0
Open-ended responses (coded and grouped)			
Commendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committed to achieving goals even through setbacks (13)</li> <li>Non-authoritarian/collaborative leadership style (11)</li> <li>Exemplary leader (general) (11)</li> <li>Effective leadership through COVID-19 crisis (8)</li> <li>Passionate about welfare of DRBU (9)</li> <li>Embodies attitude and authority of a leader (7)</li> </ul>		
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share experience by coaching next generation (1)</li> </ul>		

### 2.2 Board Relations

Based on Table 2.2, almost all of the participating trustees are positive about Dr. Rounds' performance in the area of board relations. Some of them commended her for fostering an atmosphere of cooperation and harmony and that she ensures board members are well-informed. Two respondents would like to see even more communications from Dr. Rounds in the future.

Table 2.2

Area 2.2 Board Relations			
Multiple-choice responses			
Statement: President Rounds...	Positive	No Response	Negative
...fosters an atmosphere of cooperation and harmony.	14 (100%)	0	0
...ensures Board members are well- informed about Board, university, and student affairs.	13 (93%)	1 (7%)	0
...acts in accordance with Board policies.	13 (93%)	1 (7%)	0
Open-ended responses (coded and grouped)			
Commendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fosters an atmosphere of cooperation and harmony (2)</li> <li>Ensures Board members are well-informed (5)</li> </ul>		
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better/more communication needed (2)</li> </ul>		

### 2.3 Administrative/Managerial Skill and Ability

Based on Table 2.3, most of the community (88%-93%) views Dr. Rounds' performance in this area positively . Respondents commended her for aiding and ensuring the completion of tasks/goals and excellent administrative/managerial skills in general.

Table 2.3

Area 2.3 Administrative/Managerial Skill and Ability			
Multiple-choice responses			
Statement: President Rounds...	Positive	Neutral	Negative
...effectively structures, sets priorities for, delegates, and facilitates the accomplishment of tasks.	34 (92%)	2 (5%)	1 (3%)
...is pragmatic in her thinking, preferring data and models to ideas and theories.	35 (88%)	4 (11%)	1 (1%)
...demonstrate focused intention when needed, but also remain open to relevant input and adapt to and embrace change whenever beneficial.	43 (93%)	2 (4%)	1 (3%)

Open-ended responses (coded and grouped)	
Commendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delegates effectively (3)</li> <li>• Aids in and ensures the completion of tasks/goals (13)</li> <li>• Excellent administrative/managerial skills (general) (8)</li> </ul>
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More work needs to be done towards structuring organization to meet long-term goals (1)</li> <li>• More strategic long term planning needed (1)</li> </ul>

### Area 2.4 Communication Skills and Social Intelligence

Based on Table 2.4, a majority (81%-92%) of each group of constituents views Dr. Rounds' communications favorably with positive ratings. Almost all of the respondents (94%) think that Dr. Rounds demonstrates a high level of social intelligence. In addition, many commended Dr. Rounds for a. fostering harmonious environment and relationships, b. being judicious and/or likeable, and c. having strong communication skills. In terms of recommendations, a theme of calling for more communications emerged.

Table 2.4

Area 2.4 Communication Skills and Social Intelligence			
Multiple-choice responses			
Statement:	Positive	Neutral	Negative
President Round is articulate in her communication and ensures that each group below both well-informed and feel heard:			
Faculty	31 (86%)	3 (8%)	2 (6%)
Staff	30 (83%)	5 (14%)	1 (3%)
Students	45 (92%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)
Alumni	17 (81%)	4 (19%)	0
Board of trustees	21 (91%)	2 (9%)	0
Donors	14 (82%)	3 (18%)	0
President Rounds demonstrates an ability to be sensitive to the politics of all the groups above, foster harmonious relationships among them, and are generally seen as judicious and likeable by all parties.	49 (94%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)
Open-ended responses (coded and grouped)			

Commendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Has strong communication skills (16)</li> <li>● Ensures all members of DRBU feel seen and heard (8)</li> <li>● Fosters harmonious environment and relationships (28)</li> <li>● Generally seen as judicious and/or likeable (22)</li> </ul>
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Calls for increased communication (6)</li> </ul>

### Area 2.5 Student Stewardship

Based on Table 2.5, most survey respondents (88%-97%) thought President Rounds has done an excellent job in four of the five sub-areas in Student Stewardship. One area that needs improvement seems to be the career development of alumni (31% of the respondents expressed neutral or negative opinions.) The same theme surfaced again in the Recommendations section - a few respondents hoped to see more emphasis on alumni development.

Table 2.5

Area 2.5 Student Stewardship			
Multiple-choice responses			
Statement	Positive	Neutral	Negative
President Rounds has a mind for ensuring that the needs of students are anticipated and met.	49 (94%)	3 (6%)	0
...students are provided with an atmosphere of learning and the appropriate resources to foster their potential for success beyond DRBU.	45 (88%)	5 (10%)	1 (2%)
President Rounds is active in implementing policies and projects that promote such things as... evaluations of student learning.	38 (97%)	1 (3%)	0
...non-curricular programming.	32 (91%)	3 (9%)	0
...career development of alumni.	22 (69%)	6 (19%)	4 (12%)
Open-ended responses (coded and grouped)			
Commendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensures needs of students are anticipated and met (12)</li> <li>● Engaged and present with students (6)</li> <li>● Demonstrates genuine care and concern for students (7)</li> </ul>		
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● More emphasis on alumni development (4)</li> <li>● More resources devoted to Campus Life/non-curricular programming (2)</li> </ul>		

### Area 3: Financial Sustainability

Based on Table 3, President Rounds was evaluated positively (86% and 89%) in both her fiscal management abilities and her work in development. Two areas that need more of the President's attention surfaced 1) engaging with alumni and 2) developing DRBU connections and resources.

Table 3.

Area 3 Financial Sustainability			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fiscal management</li> <li>Development</li> </ul>			
Multiple-choice responses			
Statement: President Rounds...	Positive	Neutral	Negative
...is adept at ensuring the fiscal needs of the university are evaluated, managed, and met.	25 (86%)	3 (10%)	1 (4%)
...is enthusiastic in strategically exercising their authority to address matters such as fundraising, student recruitment, reaching prospective donors, and other areas that contribute to the overall growth of DRBU.	31 (89%)	3 (9%)	1 (2%)
Open-ended responses (coded and grouped)			
Commendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skillful management of finances (5)</li> <li>Actively participates in development efforts (3)</li> <li>Actively supports development efforts of others (2)</li> <li>Strategically ensures overall growth of DRBU (3)</li> <li>Meets with current and potential donors (2)</li> </ul>		
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could do more to make sure finance needs are met (2)</li> <li>More focus on developing alumni (4)</li> <li>More focus needed on developing DRBU connections and resources (7)</li> </ul>		

The following table shows the development summary for the period 2020-2022 in comparison with 2015-2017, which is the period just before the 2017 presidential review:

	2015-2017	2020-2022
Capital Expenditure	\$9,190,000	\$550,000



DRBA Grant	\$1,614,791	\$1,753,969
Donations	\$1,231,725	\$1,918,804
Endowment Fund Donation	\$1,000,000	\$0
Restricted Funds	\$0	\$844,540
Sudhana Center Budget	\$806,706	\$464,565
Sudhana Center Special Projects	\$0	\$953,587
Total	\$13,843,222	\$6,485,465

The significant sum in the capital expenditure in the previous period consists of the renovation of DRBU’s main building (SW123) on the campus of City of Ten Thousand Buddhas (\$5.4 million), the purchase of the Sudhana Center (\$3.2 million), and the first phase of the renovation of women’s dorm at CTTB. These major capital expenditures (particularly the renovation SW123 and the purchase of Sudhana Center) addressed major capacity needs and anticipated DRBU’s growth beyond the current review period. Therefore expectation for a comparable level of development in this area would be unrealistic. The growth in DRBA grants and donation reflect increased development efforts to support DRBU’s gradually growing annual expenditure as it fills out its teaching, administrative, and service capacities, even amid the global COVID-19 pandemic. The Sudhana Center budget from 2015-2017 includes maintenance, operations, and small capital projects whereas capital projects are put in a separate category for 2020-2022. In this light, development for operating and upgrading Sudhana Center as a student residence and activity and event venue (including retreats) saw a significant boost from 2015-2017 (\$1.4million over \$806,706) One category that the development efforts under President Rounds’ leadership in 2020-2022 falls short in comparison to 2015-2017 is the endowment fund (none compared to \$1million). Overall, development efforts are consistent with DRBU growth pattern in the past five to six years. This is no small feat considering the challenges many higher education institutions and the nonprofit sector faced (and continue to face) during the global pandemic in the area of fundraising and philanthropy. On the other hand, development efforts will need to seriously aim toward providing a foundation for long-term DRBU sustainability and resiliency under future disruptive events.

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

President Rounds is currently presiding over the strategic planning process underway at DRBU and expected to be completed by December 2022. This process was originally intended to be completed in 2020, but was significantly delayed, as well as informed by, the ongoing pandemic. While DRBU is developing this set of strategic priorities for the new cycle, President Rounds is continuing to make progress on the priorities laid out in the [2013 strategic plan](#).

## **Obtain WASC candidacy**

The 2013 DRBU's Strategic Plan put forward the goal to achieve WASC Candidacy by Fall of 2018. DRBU received initial accreditation in March 2018, exceeding its own expectations. Currently, under President Round's leadership, the university is undergoing an institution-wide self-study in preparation for reaffirmation in 2023. The Institutional Report is to be submitted to WASC in December of 2022 and external reviewers are scheduled to take place in March and October of 2023.

## **Implement academic programs**

Under Dr. Rounds leadership, DRBU's two original academic programs at DRBU have been successfully shepherded and one new program has been launched. During the president's terms, DRBU has graduated eight cohorts from its MA program and four from its BA program. Additionally, a comprehensive program review was completed for the MA program in 2017 and in 2021 for the BA program. In Fall of 2021, DRBU also implemented the new Graduate Certificate in Buddhist Translation program, which graduated its first class in Spring of 2022.

## **Recruit and retain the initial cohorts of students**

DRBU's MA program has continued to attract a steady stream of enrollees. In 2021, it saw its greatest enrollment to date, with 16 matriculating students. Recruiting students for its BA program, however, 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, and it's possible this national trend, as well as the pandemic, have impacted DRBU. To address this issue, President Rounds oversaw an increase in budget for outreach and recruiting of 37% in 2019 and 89% in 2022. The team has since hired more long-term staff members and greatly increased the sophistication of methods for reaching and communicating with potential students. Although DRBU has so far continued to fall short of its enrollment projections, it is hopeful that this re-allocation of resources, and the continued subsiding of the COVID-19 pandemic, will lead to upward trend in enrollment over the next few years.

All of DRBU's programs are performing well in regards to retaining students. The BA program's retention rate is high compared to both the national average of [66.4% in Fall of 2020](#) and on par with rates of its peer institutions such as Saint Mary's and Thomas Aquinas Colleges which fall at [88.2%](#) and [93%](#) respectively. The average retention rate for this program for 2013 through 2021 is 87%. Although there is [no national data](#) to compare MA program retention and graduation data against, the average retention rate for the program has exceeded the BA program and improved in recent years, rising from 81% in 2013-2016 to 94% for 2017-2021. DRBU's certificate program is still too young to produce meaningful graduation or retention data.

## **Develop buildings and infrastructure of our university campus**

During her second term, President Rounds has led DRBU through multiple efforts to develop its facilities. [Attachment 10](#) 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 tripled 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.

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.

Additionally, several building projects are currently projected or underway (see [Attachment 11](#) for a list of major renovation projects). On the central DRBU campus, plans have been made and funding has been secured to add an industrial kitchen to the female dorm through the renovation of an adjoining wing. Preliminary drafts of the new Strategic Plan to be formally completed by November also outline further next steps for DRBU in this area.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Findings**

Overall, the results of the survey suggest that the president is quite highly regarded by all members of the DRBU community. When given the opportunity to rank their perception of the president and/or her actions, a significant majority of individuals described her positively in 26 out of 27 areas. For most of the questions, President Rounds even received "positive" responses 90% or more of the time. Additionally, "negative" responses were quite rare, with "neutral" responses accounting for the large majority of non-"positive" responses.

### ***Mission and Vision***

*"As a senior disciple of Master Hua, Susan clearly understands the mission and vision of the University and passionately embodies the spirit of them in her actions."*

*“Dr. Rounds embodies the highest values of DRBU in her tireless leadership and service to the university.”*

This section of the survey captured feedback on the president’s commitment to the university mission and vision, long-term vision and planning, as well as perceptions of her moral character. In general, respondents found that she both well understood and was highly committed to the mission and vision of the university. Many individuals specifically mentioned in free response that she embodies the mission and vision in her actions. President Rounds also received an abundance of endorsements of her moral character. Numerous free responses specifically commended her for being compassionate, demonstrating integrity, and being honest. She was viewed a bit less positively in the area of long-term vision and planning with only 86% of responses ranking her positively, and eight separate free responses recommending more focus was needed here. This is congruent with statements made in her self-assessment about the immediate need to place more attention on sculpting the future of DRBU and ensuring its sustainability.

### **Leadership**

*“Dr. Rounds is a mothering type leader, leading with her support and encouragement rather than with a heavy hand.”*

*“President Rounds' leadership style is more "collaborative" than "authoritarian." This is especially important to DRBU's organizational structure, in which the Faculty has a strong role in decision making. That said, whenever a situation calls for it, and in order to carry out her responsibilities as President, she exercises her authority clearly, judiciously and decisively. In this regard, as President, she is a perfect fit for DRBU.”*

*“I have been very impressed with Sue's leadership during the covid-19 pandemic. She has repeatedly lifted up the spirits of everyone on campus through repeated disappointments and difficulties. Her leadership skills and cultivation have really shone and she has kept everyone informed of the shifts with incredible care, flexibility, and resilience.*

Questions from this area of the survey solicited feedback on the President’s ability to embody the attitude of a leader and to passionately persevere in the direction of DRBU’s goals. Many respondents mentioned in free response that she showed commitment to achieving goals even through setbacks, with several specifically mentioning her effective leadership through the COVID-19 crisis. In her self-assessment, President Rounds also recognizes the pandemic as a harrowing time for both her and the rest of DRBU faculty and staff, commending DRBU as a whole for “amazing resilience in the face of obstacles.” Eleven different individuals also specifically commended President Rounds on her unique, collaborative style of leadership, often describing it as remarkably “non-authoritarian.” The only recommendation received in this area

suggests President Rounds begin “Sharing her leadership experience by coaching the younger generation.” If it becomes apparent that more individuals share this sentiment, it may serve the president to develop a plan for training others as part of the “succession planning” described in her self-assessment.

### **Board Relations**

*“Dr. Rounds presents a President's Report at each Trustees' Meeting, listens carefully and responds positively to feedback, and cooperatively implements that feedback whenever appropriate. Moreover, she has warmly and consistently invited trustees to visit the university and observe classes, as well as made herself available to any trustee for more private communications.”*

*“Despite all of the ways mentioned above on how the President reaches out to, engages, and informs the Trustees, some members have said that they do not feel completely informed.”*

The section asked trustees for feedback on President Rounds' participation in the board. Although there were fewer responses in general to this section, together they suggest this is one of President Rounds' strongest areas. All of the responding board members ranked President Rounds positively for her ability to foster an atmosphere of cooperation and harmony and she received no “negative” responses for any question. The recommendations and commendations, however, did reveal a somewhat conflicting message. Five members of the board commended her ability to keep them well-informed, while two specifically stated that more communication was needed.

### **Administrative/Managerial Skill and Ability**

*“President Rounds structures and sets priorities for the accomplishment of tasks, and her strong “people skills” enable her to delegate, and facilitate that effectively. President Rounds' pronounced administrative/managerial skills had already been well honed throughout her decades-long professional career prior to her appointment as DRBU President.”*

*“While our president is pragmatic when dealing with on-the-ground issues in the day to day, I see a need for more work on setting a larger vision for the mid-term and structuring the organization to meet those goals. We need to start to move from just the day-to-day to thinking about who we want to be as an institution midterm to longer term and solving key issues that are important for that growth to happen.”*

This area collected feedback on President Rounds' ability to ensure necessary tasks are completed at DRBU, to be pragmatic and evidence-driven in her thinking, and to remain focused on pre-described goals while adapting to and embracing change when beneficial. The president was regarded highly in all areas. Several respondents mentioned in free response that she is proactive in ensuring the completion of tasks/goals and that she demonstrates excellent administrative/managerial skills in general. The two recommendations offered in free response touched on a need for more focus on strategic long-term planning, echoing the recommendations offered in the "Mission and Vision" area and the president's own statements in her self-assessment.

### **Communication Skills and Social Intelligence**

*"Susan works well in conflict resolution. She is calm and fair minded. She has guided DRBU staff and students through many difficulties and modeled an attitude which encourages all parties to resolve conflicts and disagreements in a positive manner."*

*"I would like to see more transparency in what aspects of the faculty/staff well-being and training the President is willing/has the power to help with. Perhaps if the President could have regular office hours for admin, faculty and staff to drop-in and consult with her regularly, that would provide a safe space for communication and would show her commitment to us all being heard."*

The questions in this section first probed respondents for their perceptions of the president's ability to ensure that all members of the university feel informed. The survey results suggest that this was viewed as one of President Rounds' weakest areas, when compared against other categories. Responses were broken down into the following categories: faculty, staff, students, alumni, board members, and donors. Staff, alumni, and donors ranked the president lowest, with only 81-83% describing her positively. Additionally, two faculty members responded that they viewed her negatively in this area. This perception was also reflected in the free response recommendations, with six individuals suggesting increased communication was needed. The president's self assessment report describes awareness of a need for more communication with students, but not with the other groups mentioned. This report will prove helpful in bringing this state of affairs to the attention of President Rounds.

A second quality investigated in this area was the president's ability to personally harmonize with individuals in the community while also fostering harmonious relationships between community members. The results suggest this was another pronounced strength for President Rounds. This is reflected by the 94% of responses that ranked her positively, but is especially highlighted by the number and consistency of free response answers: twenty-eight separate individuals all commended President Rounds for her ability to foster a harmonious environment and relationships; another twenty-two individuals described finding Dr. Rounds as generally judicious and likeable. In her self-assessment, the president reveals she is aware of these

strengths and the positive impact they have on the individuals and the university as a whole. She writes, "I believe it is important for people to feel appreciated and validated for the hard work they do, and to be reassured when things are difficult, or when conflicts arise, as they inevitably do when people are working together."

### ***Student Stewardship***

*"Dr. Rounds consistently demonstrates genuine care and concern for students and attentiveness to students' needs."*

*"We need to put more emphasis on the career development of alumni. I am interested in the data of the alumni's career after leaving DRBU."*

In the area of "Student Stewardship," perceptions of President Rounds' abilities to meet the needs of current students, foster success beyond DRBU, implement policies and projects that support student learning, develop non-curricular programming, and develop the career of alumni were solicited. The survey results suggest the president is viewed favorably in all these qualities, except in career development of alumni. With only 69% of respondents viewing her positively in this area and 31% viewing her negatively, the score for this question was by far the lowest of the entire survey. This implies the DRBU community sees a strong need for improvement in this area, a sentiment that was also captured in free response recommendations. On the other hand, commendations focused on describing an obvious and genuine concern for student well-being that the president demonstrates.

### ***Financial Sustainability***

*"Managing towards benchmarks would be helpful in my opinion."*

The final section of the survey collected feedback on President Rounds' management of fiscal resources and her efforts in developing DRBU. A few individuals commended the president through free response for her skilful management of finances, with two people positively describing her direct engagement in fundraising projects. However, this section also contained the most free response recommendations of any area in the survey, with thirteen coded responses. This robust response suggests that management of fiscal resources and development are areas that could have benefited from more presidential attention. Four of the recommendations, again, called for greater focus to be paid to the success of alumni. Additionally, seven individuals recommended more work to be done on developing DRBU's connections and resources, and two suggested that more could be done to ensure that the financial needs of the university are met. President Rounds' self-assessment describes awareness of these issues and the need for efforts to be directed towards this arena in the coming year.

Based on these findings and all information uncovered by this investigation, **the presidential review committee of the board resolved to recommend to the Board of Trustees to reappoint Dr. Susan Rounds for an additional five-year term starting on July 1 2023** with the following commendations, recommendations, and an additional condition:

### **Commendations**

- President Rounds is regarded as demonstrating exemplary skills in leadership embodied in a firm dedication to the mission and vision of the university and a marked ability to ensure its goals are realized. Additionally, her collaborative, “non-authoritarian” leadership style helps ensure members of the DRBU community feel involved in shaping the future of the university and respected by their elected leader.
- President Rounds serves as an exemplar of high moral character for the university community through her decisions and actions.
- The university robustly commends President Rounds on her ability to foster an environment of harmony, both on campus and among the wider DRBU community.
- President Rounds has been an effective executive administrator of DRBU’s ongoing operations.
- President Rounds demonstrated great skill and care in her guidance of the university through the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. This turbulent era required rapid adaptation of many DRBU policies and practices, including transitioning to online instruction for a full school year. Under President Rounds’ leadership, DRBU was able to survive the challenges brought by the pandemic and do so without compromising its values.

### **Recommendations**

- Though the community regards the president as effective in managing day-to-day operations, many responses also point to a need for President Rounds to direct more attention to the long-term success of DRBU through leadership in strategic planning, and the articulation of DRBU’s value propositions.
- Focus on development through raising DRBU’s public profile and recognition, fundraising, and strengthening relationships with internal and external stakeholders, including alumni.
- Affect changes that impact the university-wide community, including campus culture (for example for younger students); faculty and staff development and wellness; intra-community communications (for example, across different departments); and personnel feedback and accountability.

### **Condition**

The trustee Presidential Committee recommends to the Board of Trustees that DRBU improve compensation for President Rounds. The committee suggests the formation of an ad hoc committee of the board to work out the details of this proposal.

### **Areas of improvement for the Review Process**



Neither the faculty nor the trustee Presidential Review Committee made any suggestion to modify the review process.

**Attachment List**

- [1. 2017 and 2022 Presidential Review Criteria Side-by-Side Comparison](#)
- [2. Presidential Review Community Feedback Survey](#)
- [3. Self-Assessment Form for the President](#)
- [4. Presidential Review Process Components](#)
- [5. Interview Questions for the President](#)
- [6. President Rounds' Self-Assessment](#)
- [7. Aggregated survey responses](#)
- [8. Spreadsheet of all raw responses from the survey](#)
- [9. DRBU Strategic Plan \(2013\)](#)
- [10. DRBU Facility Capacity 2021-2022](#)
- [11. List of major renovation projects at Sudhana Center](#)