A confidential report of findings prepared for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.
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# Roster of Evaluators

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<th>Name and Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>Dr. Jim D. Hardwick, Vice President for Student Life, Carroll College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluator</td>
<td>Dr. Lois Harris, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Cornish College of the Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluator</td>
<td>Dr. Elizabeth Fountain, Associate Provost and Director of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, City University of Seattle</td>
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Introduction

Brigham Young University-Idaho’s Year One Report is clear, complete, and well-written. It addresses the university’s prior recommendations from NWCCU visits and the requirements of the Year One Self-Evaluation in turn, making it easy for the evaluators to read and follow. The Addenda with examples of the University Report Card, Report Card for Core Theme #1, and the Outcomes and Indicators for Core Themes were especially helpful in demonstrating how each core theme will be measured in terms of overall mission fulfillment. Also attached to the Year One Report is a Progress Report for Online Programs as required by the Commission, as discussed below.

Progress on Recommendations/Issues Requested by the Commission

BYU-Idaho presents its Progress Report on Online Programs as an addendum to its Year One Report. The Progress Report demonstrates progress made toward strengthening the university’s ability to offer high-quality online learning experiences to its students, on its way toward meeting an ambitious enrollment growth target. BYU-Idaho has invested a great deal of time, energy, and resources into improving its technical, physical, and service infrastructure in support of online students. In addition, it has improved its ability to recruit, select, and support faculty to teach online courses.

The team notes some questions to guide BYU-Idaho’s continued work in this arena. The university established a goal to offer 17% of its curriculum online, and progress is reported in Table One on page two of the Progress Report. Yet the reader cannot determine whether the number of courses, sections, and credit hours reported in Table One mean the university is on track to meet that target. Regarding Concern One, Appropriateness of the Institution’s Technology and Support Infrastructure, the report indicates that “learning content management and collaboration tools” are areas of critical need; yet there is no definite statement of when these will be implemented. The Online Support Center and other services for online students seem to be quite robust, yet they seem to be somewhat separate from services to residential students. This can be appropriate given different student needs; the university’s commitment to seeing online learning as a core part of its learning and teaching mission argues for keeping them closely linked. Finally, mentoring for online faculty will be an important addition, and the report would benefit from including a timeline for its implementation as well.

Eligibility Requirements

Understanding the request to write an executive summary of the Eligibility Requirements 2 and 3 with this report was a late addition to the guidelines, the institution is encouraged to follow the guidelines released March 2, 2011 to ensure its next report addresses these requirements as noted in the guidelines.

Section One: Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations

BYU-Idaho’s Year One Report presents its Mission, Core Themes, and the objectives and indicators that will allow it to determine its progress related to mission fulfillment. The institution has established a mission clearly related to its identity as a private college owned and operated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and its Core Themes follow clearly from the mission.
Standard 1.A. Mission

BYU-Idaho provides a clear and succinct summary of its mission statement. The mission statement is purported to be well-known throughout the university community. In particular, the report’s description of how the new Core Themes link back to the mission statement is clear and direct. The Core Themes directly reflect elements in the mission statement. Each has clear objectives and indicators that are well-defined in the report.

BYU-Idaho has developed a fairly robust and complex process for distilling its institutional objectives and indicators of achievement into a “report card” format. The explanation for how this is done is generally clear, and provides the basis for the institution’s definition of mission fulfillment in a logical way. However, the evaluation team notes that the number of outcomes and indicators is quite high, and in several instances the sheer number seems to run the risk of diluting the institution’s focus on its priorities as expressed in its Core Themes. The team encourages BYU-Idaho to look for opportunities to sharpen its focus and reduce the number of indicators it must track at the institutional level, leaving some of the more detailed or granular indicators to specific departments for assessing their own performance.

Standard 1.B. Core Themes

The evaluation team noted several comments on the organization of the Core Themes, Objectives, and Indicators.

In Core Theme One, Develop Disciple-Leaders, objective four (serve more students) is not clearly related back to the Core Theme. It is not intuitively clear why measuring the number of students served is a key component of achieving the development of disciple-leaders. The impetus to serve more students might fit better as a strategic goal than a Core Theme objective.

Core Theme One also provides an example of the reviewers’ concerns regarding the proliferation of indicators. Core Theme One has four objectives, ten outcomes, and 38 indicators. There can be redundancy in the indicators, for example, in Objective 2, the outcome “students take advantage of leadership opportunities” offers three indicators, two of which might be subsumed into the third (percentage of students at graduation who held a leadership or volunteer position). The team encourages BYU-Idaho to look for opportunities to collapse the indicators and/or outcomes into a smaller, more focused set.

In Core Theme Two, Provide a Quality Education, objectives four (increase the use of online and hybrid learning) and five (lower the relative cost of a BYU-Idaho education by using our resources well) seem to focus more on access than on educational quality. The team also raised the question of whether objectives related to student learning outcomes should be aligned with this Core Theme; the institution makes the case that they are well accounted for in the third core theme.
In Core Theme Three, Prepare Students for Future Roles, the team supports BYU-Idaho’s efforts to develop more direct measures of learning related to general education and the majors, and its commitment to learning outcomes assessment as the best means of determining progress related to this theme.

In Core Theme Four, Maintain a Wholesome Environment, the team recommended a clearer definition of “wholesome” to drive the development of outcomes and indicators, and a consideration of whether the use of the verb “maintain” conveys the true aspirational nature of this Core Theme. The team also noted that the objectives, outcomes, and indicators focus almost entirely on the physical environment, and very little on the “academic, cultural, and spiritual” aspects of the environment as noted in the mission statement. The measures related to BYU-Idaho employees seemed an uneasy fit here, without more careful connection to student development. The evaluation team encourages BYU-Idaho to reconsider the fit of many of these elements as more appropriate to its analysis of Standard Two, Resources.

The report indicates that the development and implementation of the Core Themes has had a positive effect on the university as a whole, primarily in increased connection from units to the mission framework. The efforts of BYU-Idaho faculty, staff, and leaders to embrace the new model and use it to drive positive change through the institution are laudable, as is BYU-Idaho’s ability to translate its robust report-card process to the new framework.

Summary

BYU-Idaho presented a Year One Report that identifies a clear mission, Core Themes that are directly linked to its mission, and substantial work on objectives and indicators that will comprise a full understanding of mission fulfillment. The institution used the process of developing its Core Themes to its advantage, with wide engagement of stakeholders that resulted in increased sense of connection of all units to its mission. It faces some challenges in streamlining its indicators in order to ensure it can focus sufficiently on its major priorities within its Core Themes.

The university also presented its Progress Report on online programs, which described additional activity in improving BYU-Idaho’s capacity to ensure the quality of online learning as it ramps up for rapid growth in this arena.

The evaluators encourage BYU-Idaho to review the number and complexity of indicators, and encourage the institution to look for opportunities to sharpen its focus and reduce the number of indicators it must track at the institutional level. The evaluators encourage BYU-Idaho to review Core Theme Four, Wholesome Environment. The team noted that the objectives, outcomes, and indicators focus almost entirely on the physical environment, and very little on the “academic, cultural, and spiritual” aspects of the environment as noted in the mission statement. The evaluation team encourages BYU-Idaho to reconsider the fit of many of the measures regarding employees as more appropriate to Standard Two, Resources.
Commendations

1. The evaluators commend BYU-Idaho for using the process of developing Core Themes, objectives, and indicators throughout the institution to improve its clarity of mission and purpose.

2. The evaluators commend BYU-Idaho for the strong alignment of its mission and Core Themes presented in a succinct and easily-understood manner.

Recommendations

None.