Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

A FOCUSED INTERIM REPORT

Brigham Young University- Idaho
Rexburg, Idaho

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Prepared by

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A Confidential Report Prepared for the
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
That Represents the Views of the Evaluator
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title Page</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the Focused Interim Report</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods Used to Verify the Institution’s Report</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Individuals Interviewed During the Visit</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis and Evaluation of Recommendation One</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis and Evaluation of Recommendation Two</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis and Evaluation of Recommendation Three</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis and Evaluation of Recommendation Four</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commendations and Recommendations</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The purpose of the Focused Interim Report is to provide a review and evaluation of Brigham Young University’s (Idaho) progress regarding Recommendations 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the spring 2004 Comprehensive Evaluation Report. The institution changed its name from Ricks College to Brigham Young University Idaho on June 21, 2000. The Board of Trustees directed the administration to take the actions necessary to effect transition from a two-year Ricks College to a four-year baccalaureate institution (BYU-Idaho). Since the spring 2004 NWCCU Comprehensive Evaluation Report, all targeted two-year programs have been phased out. A new President, Dr. Kim B. Clark, former dean of the Harvard School of Business has been appointed and the transition to a four-year baccalaureate granting institution continues. Student enrollment has increased from 10,484 FTE in fall 2003 to 11,273 FTE in fall 2005.

Quality of the Focused Interim Report

The report was very well organized. The evaluator appreciated the summary of the recent developments since the Full-Scale Evaluation Team’s visit. The institutional report clearly stated University actions and progress for each component embedded within the Recommendations of the Full-Scale Evaluation Committee Report. The writing was easily understood and appropriate supportive materials were included in the exhibits.

Methods Used to Verify the Institution’s Report

The Evaluator reviewed the information received from the Commission, read the spring 2004 Full-Scale Evaluation Committee Report, the Institutional Report and reviewed the Commission’s Standards related to the Focused Interim Report. The evaluator contacted Brigham Young University-Idaho and requested interviews with Board members, Administrators, Faculty, Staff and Students. A complete interview schedule was arranged very expeditiously by the University and communicated to the Evaluator prior to the Visit. The Evaluator conducted interviews of individuals and groups on April 13, 2006. A verbal report summarizing the evidence collected for each of the four recommendations was presented to the President and senior administrators as exit report on April 13, 2006.

List of Individuals Interviewed During the Visit

The interview schedule including names of the individuals interviewed is included in Appendix A of this report.
Analysis and Evaluation of Recommendation One

Recommendation One: While the Committee commends the University community for its dedication and diligence in moving from a two-year program to a four-year baccalaureate institution in a very short time period, the Committee recommends that the University re-examine its capacity to accomplish its self-identified aggressive academic goals while simultaneously maintaining a wholesome academic, cultural, social, and spiritual environment. (Standard 1.A.4 and 5)

The Evaluator found significant progress in terms of increasing the capacity of the University to accomplish its robust academic goals. Specifically, the University has hired a significant number of new faculty members across programs since the spring 2004 comprehensive review. Thirty-seven more faculty members with experience in four-year institutions have been hired since the spring 2004 review bringing the total of new hires to support the transition to a four year program to 96. Interviews with administrators, deans, faculty and students confirm that the University has sufficient number of faculty to deliver instruction. The 450 full-time faculty members teaching 12 hours per semester with an average class size of 25-30 over the three sessions of fall, winter, and summer can deliver the credit hours needed to serve students with sufficient courses. The University has budgeted additional funds for adjuncts and part-time positions as well as funding for up to 43 FTE new positions for the future. These hires have provided sufficient capacity to deliver adequate instruction for a four-year baccalaureate institution.

Resources have been directed toward increasing the academic capacity by completing construction of the Ricks Building and major remodeling projects in the Clarke and Romney Buildings. Completion of these facilities has significantly increased classroom and office space to accommodate the growth from 8,600 students to 11,600 full-time equivalent students in 2006.

Results of the Student Evaluation of Institutional Mission and Goals Survey administered during winter 2006 indicate BYU-Idaho has continued to provide a wholesome academic, cultural, social, and spiritual environment. Ninety-eight percent of the students participating in the survey supported the satisfaction rating of the wholesome academic, cultural, social, and spiritual environment at BYU-Idaho as compared to ninety-seven percent in the winter of 2002.

An analysis of student course evaluations of upper versus the lower division courses indicates that faculty members have become more experienced in teaching the upper division courses. For example, assessment data supplied by the University indicate that upper division student course evaluations now slightly exceed lower division which was not the case in the fall of 2004. It appears that the University has been able to increase its capacity to meet its academic goals while maintaining a wholesome environment. An analysis of student survey data, and interviews with faculty and students enabled the evaluator to conclude that output performance-centered assessment data indicate that the University has seriously considered the capacity issue raised by the 2004 comprehensive
Another significant change that has increased the capacity of individual faculty members to pursue faculty development activities is the creation of an improved academic calendar. The University has created three 14 week semesters of fall, winter, and summer. The result is decreased faculty load from 37 to 36 hours distributed as 12+12+12. Faculty members can apply for up to 3 hours of release time each year to develop curriculum or supervise student research further reducing their teaching load to 33 hours over three semesters.

Analysis and Evaluation of Recommendation Two

Recommendation Two: While the Committee finds considerable evidence of
evidence of the linkage between assessment and planning consistently over
time is required. (Standard 1.B.4 through 1.B.8, Standard 2.B, Policy 2.2)

President Clark has initiated bold initiatives to preserve the quality of the two-year Ricks College while making the transition to four-year BYU-Idaho. Specifically, three assessment initiatives drive the goal of increasing quality while at the same time serving more students with greater efficiencies and lower costs.

Assessment is conducted across multiple levels of the University. The University has taken action since the spring 2004 comprehensive visit to implement a cycle of linkages between assessment and planning. The three initiatives include 1) The Balanced Scorecard provides an information system to make data coherent and to enable systematic and holistic assessment, 2) Systematic assessment of every college and every department, and 3) Assessment of outside the classroom experience.

The Balanced Scorecard compiles assessment data for planning from the perspectives of students, internal operations, financial operations, and learning and growth opportunities. The Scorecard links to planning by helping the community identify what are the critical tasks, how they interrelated and what are the drivers and outcomes expected.

Data are collected and analyzed from student learning outcomes, graduate and employer surveys, every service department and costs and innovations. This process enables department chairs, college deans, directors, vice presidents and President Clark to holistically assess where they are in relation to the mission of BYU-Idaho.

A second component of the linkage of assessment to planning is the implementation of systematic periodic review of every college, department, and program on a 3-5 year basis. For example, the academic enterprise is studying general education with the goal of launching a revised general education program in fall 2008. President Clark has commissioned a faculty committee to conduct an analysis and recommend a redesign of the current general education program. Since the 2004 evaluation team recommended
that assessment of general education be improved, the Evaluator looked for evidence of efforts to improve the assessment of general education. However, according to the institutional report (pages 16, 17) and interviews with administrators, the University has decided not to initiate new assessment activity of general education. Their plan is to redesign first and then develop an assessment to evaluate the success of the new general education program. Interviews with deans and faculty indicated dissatisfaction with the current general education program because of administrative challenges. However, self-reported gains data and employment data from graduating students have been used to conclude that the current general education continues to serve students well. Interviews of deans and faculty affirmed general confusion about the next steps in assessing and improving general education. The Evaluator stressed the importance of giving attention to improving the assessment of general education as part of the redesign and implementation process in the exit report.

A third component of linking assessment to planning is the review of students’ experience outside the classroom. The University is very interested in developing leadership in its graduates. Currently they are assessing how students experience BYU-Idaho by identifying what students get out of the experience outside the classroom. One of the findings of this assessment effort is that 25% of the students are married. This assessment data has raised important planning questions of housing, extra-curricular activities, health insurance, etc. for married students.

The Evaluator found significant progress in reporting program by program assessment on an annual basis via the annual stewardship review. Analysis of the 2004 Academic Stewardship Review indicates brief two-three page reports from each academic department or college that end with budget requests for the next budget cycle. There is ample assessment of student learning but there was little evaluation of student learning assessment within the stewardship reviews. Annual stewardship reviews also exist for Student Life and Student Assistance Centers. These reviews serve the function of indicating program assessment with the budgeting process. Most annual reviews centered on a review of the major accomplishments and projected budget requests for the following budget year. Interviews with the deans, directors and academic vice-president indicate that analysis of assessment data drives the steward review. The Evaluator suggests that the linkage between the assessment data and the review and subsequent plans be made explicit in the review report.

President Clark has directed the academic enterprise of the University to place all new budget requests within the context of three criteria: improvement of quality, serving more students, and maintaining the same or lower costs. The 2006 stewardship reviews are to present a rationale for budget increases based on how the increased resources will be used to enhance student learning. Plans to assess student leaning and future firm assessment data are required to justify the continuation of new instructional resources. Non-instructional departments must provide a rationale to support new funding requests by stressing the proposed impact on improving service. Assessment data indicating a positive impact on service will also be required to justify the continuation of new funding in these departments.
There continues to be a need to integrate assessment results into the ongoing academic planning. The creation of benchmarks for student course assessments aid in the identification of struggling faculty is noteworthy but does not directly assess student learning. Advisory councils have been established to solicit advice from industry professionals. These councils should provide a mechanism to facilitate the integration of external advice with academic assessment results and integration of retention and graduation assessment analysis by Institutional Research into ongoing academic planning (Standard 2.B.3, Policy 2.2). These new initiatives should focus on integrating student learning assessment data into ongoing academic planning.

**Analysis and Evaluation of Recommendation Three**

**Recommendation Three:** Noting the emphasis the University places on teaching and service, the Committee strongly recommends the University develop and implement workload policies that will both maintain those emphases and ensure that faculty are able to maintain currency in their teaching fields at a level appropriate to a baccalaureate institution. The current teaching loads of faculty, coupled with the University’s expectations for service, appear to leave little time for faculty to maintain disciplinary currency. This is exacerbated by the University’s movement to the baccalaureate level, which requires engagement with the discipline at a deeper level than at the associate level. (Standard 2.A.1, Standard 4.A.3)

Analysis of faculty teaching loads and workload policies of three 14 week semesters and faculty instructional loads of 12+12+12 and interviews with faculty members indicate that faculty feel they must teach the 36 hours of load. They report that it continues to be difficult to identify adjunct faculty members especially in the sciences and in nursing to provide the option for full-time faculty to reduce their teaching loads.

Faculty members report that overloads beyond the 36 hours of teaching continue in many departments. For example, one faculty member interviewed was carrying a 17 hour overload during spring semester 2006. The current policy of requiring VPAA approval and scheduling overloads in the evening and in continuing education classes has reduced the overall number of overloads (Table 11 page 13 or the IR) since the 2004 NWCCU visit.

A review of non-instructional duties including committees and advising indicates that the centralized Advising Centers are reducing faculty advising of course selection. According to interviews with the faculty, the Advising Center advising of course selection has significantly reduced faculty advising of this type and increased time for faculty professional development and classroom planning. Interview with the students indicated that they like the advising centers and think the centers staff does a better job of advising regarding course selection and program changes than most faculty. Center advisors have more current course and program information and do a better job than faculty members.
Interviews with faculty members indicated that they are staying current with their field and participating in their professional organizations. Interviews with student affirmed that faculty know their content and are current. For example, biology majors reported that they experienced “cutting-edge biology research” in off-campus internships and were pleased that faculty knew about the research and had read the related articles.

There has been considerable review of the Professional Development Leave (PDL) polices since the 2004 visit. The current PDL policy and procedures will be discontinued in the winter 2007 semester and morphed into the Curriculum/Research Fellowship (CRF) program. This CRF will provide faculty members with the opportunity to reduce their teaching load by 3 hours in other words from 36 to 33 over the three annual semesters. The requests for CRF approval are reviewed and approved by each department chair and college dean.

The University has developed new policies regarding sabbatical leaves in response to the NWCCU 2004 visit. The concept of a sabbatical leave “bank” will be discontinued but the original concept of sabbatical leaves available to faculty every five years will be continued. The evaluator suggested that criteria related be developed for sabbatical leave proposals. The criteria should clearly require plans to stay current in the applicant’s field and alignment with the department and college goals and the individual’s annual growth plan. The Board of Trustees has approved 66 FTE replacement instructors to fund the revised PDL now CRF professional leave and sabbatical leaves.

The new academic calendar of three semesters per academic year of 14+14+14 weeks and the faculty loads of 12+12+12 hours have been approved by the board. The Board has committed to hiring 26 new FTE faculty members and 14 one year faculty positions to implement the reduction in instructional load hours from 15 to 12 for fall, winter and summer semesters. The implementation of the new academic calendar and teaching load has reduced the average number of courses per semester from 5 to 4 and course preparations from 3 to 2.

Most importantly, funding was approved by the Board of Trustees so that all faculty members could take advantage of a reduced 3 hour load each year and a sabbatical leave every five years. Prior to 2005, the resources were not in place to allow all faculty members to take advantage of these opportunities. However, 33 hours of load across three annual semesters of 14 + 14 + 14 allows only eight weeks in mid-summer for a break from the teaching assignment. Instructional load policies state no more than 15 and no less than 9 hours per semester of teaching load. Since approximately 15 of the faculty members at the time of the transition chose the option of a 9 month contract, the large majority of faculty members are assigned teach across the three annual semesters. All new faculty members do not have a choice regarding a 9 month or 11 month contract. The new faculty members hired during the last three years were recruited to teach 36 hours across the three semesters. Faculty members expressed a concern that most of their colleagues feel they must teach the full 36 hours of instructional assignment across the three semesters. Therefore, faculty members will not opt for the reduced contract options.
of 33 hours at 91.6% of the full contract, 30 teaching load hours at 83% of full contract, or 27 hours annual teaching load hours at 75% of the full contract.

The University has implemented a staffing plan that has resulted in the hiring of 37 full-time professors since the spring 2004 Full-Scale Evaluation Committee Report and the approval of 46 additional full-time positions for 2006-07. The net effect of these actions has been to hire sufficient number of new faculty members across the University since the spring 2004 comprehensive review to ensure the capacity to fulfill the academic goals of the University (Standard 2.C.7).

The University has added new majors and increased the infrastructure expenses including instructional technology to support the significant increases in undergraduate enrollment. The resulting redistribution of the undergraduate students across more majors has increased the use of adjuncts. Although overload assignments of full-time faculty have been reduced they continue to be high in some departments such as language and nursing. The evaluator suggests that the University continue to evaluate the enrollments in majors that may have declined during this same period of time and consider redistributing faculty resources to programs that are growing (Standard 1.B.4).

**Analysis and Evaluation of Recommendation Four**

**Recommendation Four:** *Faculty scholarship in the discipline is necessary to maintain effective instruction. The Committee recommends that institutional policies and procedures concerning scholarship be developed and implemented in collaboration with the faculty to ensure that faculty members maintain in a chosen subject a high level of expertise, originality, critical analysis, significance, and demonstrability. (Standard 4.B)*

Scholarship analysis of faculty accomplishments in 2005 indicates an acceptable level of scholarly activity that includes presentations at conferences and publications. Deans, directors and faculty report that there is sufficient professional travel funding across all colleges and departments to enable them to participate in their professional organizations and thus stay current and maintain a high level of expertise. Interviews with students indicated that the faculty know their fields and in many cases bring both outstanding formal academic training as well as informal and invaluable external experience to the teaching learning enterprise.

Professional Development Leaves (PDL) changes include the planned discontinuation in winter 2007 of the Professional Development Leaves and implementation of the Curriculum/Research Fellowship program. Professional development opportunities will be built into the new faculty contract. The 12+12+12 hours teaching load allows faculty a reduction from 15 hours of teaching during fall and winter (i.e. three hours more each week for professional development). An additional three hours of load (i.e. three hours more per week for one semester) will be granted if Curriculum/Research Fellowship proposals are approved that focus on curriculum development or research with students.
The concept of a sabbatical leave “bank” will be discontinued, but the original concept of sabbatical leaves being available every five years will continue.

Faculty members and college deans affirmed the availability of sustained tuition assistance and support for master’s level faculty members to pursue doctoral studies. Newly hired master’s level faculty members must complete the doctorate to receive Continuing Faculty Status (CFS). The University has made some progress in terms of increasing the percentage of terminal degrees of full-time faculty. Table 8 on page 10 of the Institutional Report indicates an increase from 36% in 2002 to 45% in 2005.

The University has responded to the NWCCU recommendation of developing policies and procedures to ensure faculty members’ high level of expertise, originality, and critical analysis in a chosen subject by establishing academic forums, regular faculty lecture series, funding for student research projects, funding professional travel, internship hubs in major cities, and faculty study groups. College Deans have formed active Advisory Councils to enhance faculty relevancy and currency in terms of what is required of graduates. The University is also pursuing second level national accreditation in specific programs. For example, Nursing, and Music Interior Design are nationally accredited. Social work and engineering are exploring and planning national accreditation efforts.

SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF THE FOUR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation One: An analysis of student survey data, and interviews with faculty and students enabled the evaluator to conclude that performance-centered assessment data indicate that the University has seriously considered the capacity issue raised by the 2004 comprehensive review. The Institution’s Focused Interim Report, and interviews with administrators, faculty members and students indicate that the University has taken action to increase its capacity to function effectively as a four-year baccalaureate degree granting institution. Specifically, hiring appropriately prepared full-time faculty, completing new buildings and renovating old ones, and reviewing policies and procedures have resulted in adequate capacity to accomplish its academic goals while maintaining a wholesome university environment (Standard 1.A.4 and 5).

Recommendation Two: There remains the challenge of “closing the assessment loop” by implementing systematic use of assessment results of student learning to evaluate and improve programs and systematically link to institutional planning. The Institutional Dashboard and Balanced Scorecard are potentially valuable links between assessment and planning. The institution needs to compile systematic evidence of using these assessments to shape on going planning. For example, the ongoing revision of general education needs a systematic assessment component to ensure evaluation of its effectiveness in meeting academic goals (Standard 1, B.4 through 1.B.8, Standard 2.B, Policy 2.2).

Recommendation Three: The evaluator commends the University on developing a staffing plan and suggests continued review of the plan to ensure that it will significantly
reduce reliance on adjunct and overload instruction in the growth areas and assure greater sufficiency and depth in these departments and colleges (Standard 2, A.1, Standard 4.A.3).

**Recommendation Four:** Institutional Policies to support scholarship since the spring 2004 site-visit include the acquisition of funding so that all faculty members could take advantage of a reduced teaching load each year and a sabbatical leave every five years. Additional initiatives to address this recommendation have been implemented to regularly review and evaluate post-CFS (i.e. tenured) faculty members regarding their scholarly efforts and to increase the number of faculty members with doctorates. Faculty lecture series, student research funds, advisory councils, academic forums, and increased funding for faculty scholarship are examples of positive responses to ensure a high level of faculty members’ expertise (Standard 4.B).

**COMMENDATIONS:**

1. Students are passionate about their disciplines and interested in knowing about change in their fields of study. They are proud of the expertise and instruction of their faculty and supportive of the wholesome academic, cultural, social and spiritual environment of BYU-Idaho.

2. The Evaluator commends the administration, faculty and staff of Brigham Young University-Idaho for their commitment to the mission of a caring educational community. The Evaluator found evidence of this commitment in the expressions of students, who spoke of administrators and faculty members as caring and accessible mentors.

3. The Evaluator commends the University for the especially beautiful and well-landscaped campus. The new buildings and renovations provide splendid educational facilities.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Since review of the Focused Interim Report and interviews of administrators and faculty indicated little evidence of improved assessment of General Education linked to institutional planning, the Evaluator recommends that the current revision of general education include a plan for regular and continuous assessment of general education. The revision needs to include expected learning outcomes for general education and regular and systematic assessment linked to institutional planning (Standard 1.B.4, Standard 2.B.1 through 2.B.3, and Policy 2.2).
APPENDICES

Appendix A

Individuals and Groups Interviewed

Thursday, April 13th

8:00 – 8:50 Administrators
Russel Benedict: Director of Financial Services
Fenton L. Broadhead: Dean of College of Business and Communications
Glenn F. Embree: Dean of College of Physical Science and Engineering
Rodney D. Keller: Dean of College of Language and Letters
Kevin Miyasaki: Registrar
Gordon Westenskow: Director of Admissions and Scholarships

9:00 – 9:50 Group of faculty members
Kathy Barnhill: Department Chair, Nursing Department
Brent W. Bean: Communications Faculty member
Christine Geddes: Department of Foreign Language- French
Ann Marie Harris: Mathematics (Assistant Chair)
J. Kent Marlor: Department of History, Geography, Political Science
Keith Patterson: Chair of the Accounting Department

10:00 – 10:40 Group of students
Jake Adams: Psychology
Trent C. Buehler: Biology
Matthew Burdick: Biology
Ammon Fife: Economics
Bret Mitchell: Accounting and Economics
Cory Nelson: Biology
Sara Nygren: Organizational Communications
Nephi Price: Business Management
Eddy Dos Santos Business (minors: International Studies/Marketing)

10:50 - 11:20 Academic Vice President Max L. Checketts

11:20 – 12 noon President Kim B. Clark

1:00 – 1:30 Phone Interview with Elder W. Rolfe Kerr, Commissioner of Church Education and a member of the Board of Trustees.

1:30 – 3:00 Evaluator scheduled interviews and review of documentation, writing of draft exit report

4:00 – 4:30 Exit report to President Clark and senior administrators