

**REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM
SPECIAL VISIT**

To: Naval Postgraduate School

February 28 - March 1, 2024

Team Roster

Chair: Peter Gray, PhD
Director of Academic Assessment Emeritus
US Naval Academy-retired

Assistant Chair: Cheryl Ney, PhD
Dean College of Education
California State University,
Los Angeles-retired

Team Member: Gerald Kobylski, PhD, COL(R)
Professor of Mathematical Sciences &
Director of Institutional Effectiveness
U.S. Military Academy

Team Member: Lonnie Olson, PhD
Professor, Director of Assessment
Texas State University

Stephanie A. Bond Huie, PhD, Visit Liaison,
Vice President
WASC Senior College and University Commission

Mark Goor, PhD
Vice President, Liaison
WASC Senior College and University
Commission

The team evaluated the institution under the 2013 Handbook and Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letters are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

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SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of Institution and Accreditation History

Description of Institution

In 1909, the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) began as the School of Marine Engineering at the United States Naval Academy, reflecting a shift in educational priorities as the Navy transitioned from sail to steam. By 1912, NPS became the Navy's post-graduate school for technical studies and during World War II, Congress passed legislation for the school to become a fully accredited, degree-granting graduate institution. In December 1951, NPS moved to its current campus in Monterey, California. From its origins as a technical and engineering school, NPS has continued to modify and add post-graduate offerings, it currently offers 36 master's and doctoral degrees. NPS serves the needs of officers and civilians in all branches of the military, other U.S. government agencies, and allied and partner governments. Applied research is integrated into these academic programs.

Currently there are more than 1,900 students attending NPS who are enrolled full-time in academic programs offered on campus. These students are military officers from the five U.S. uniformed services, military officers from approximately thirty partner countries, and a small number of civilian federal and state employees—all nominated for admission.

Additionally, NPS has a 20-year history with distance learning and now offers over 20 online distance learning (DL) master's programs, in which nearly 1,100 students, mostly civilian government employees, enroll part-time annually. Overall, 35-40% of the students attending NPS do so through online distance learning (DL), with 25% of all courses offered designated as DL. Delivery methods are largely synchronous, with students meeting through an online forum such as Zoom or Teams. In addition, over ten thousand students participate annually in short-term, executive education, and professional development programs throughout the U.S., aboard U.S. Navy warships traveling around the globe.

NPS is one institution of the Naval University System (NUS) which itself is one aspect of the Naval Education Enterprise (NEE). The Naval University System consists of NPS, the United States Naval Academy, Naval War College, Marine Corps University, and the United States Naval Community College. The NEE also includes the Naval Reserve Officers' Training Corps, Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps, Flag Officer, General Officer, and executive education programs, Voluntary Education/Tuition Assistance programs, and other DON-funded scholarship, fellowship, and graduate education programs.

The NUS mission and strategic plan is guided by the 2023 Naval Education Strategy (NES), published by the Secretary of Navy. NES has three Lines of Effort (LOE): LOE 1 emphasizes the necessity of continuous

learning to enhance the effectiveness of the fighting force and the criticality of education as a warfighting enabler. LOE 2 focuses on incorporating education into talent management frameworks to ensure alignment with the Department's needs and encourages all personnel to seek learning opportunities. LOE 3 highlights the importance of strengthening the NUS through increased collaboration, modern learning delivery methods, and technologies, as well as alignment with prioritized naval warfighting needs.

The Education for Seapower Advisory Board (E4SAB) has oversight of Navy undergraduate and graduate education, including the Naval Postgraduate School, the Naval War College, and the Navy Community College. There are three main subcommittees of the advisory board, one for each of these three institutions.

Retired Vice Adm. Ann E. Rondeau was appointed president of the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in January of 2019 and has recently been reappointed through 2030. Soon after her arrival at NPS she led the institution through their successful 2020 Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR) of Accreditation (the review took place Oct. 7-9, 2020). The WSCUC Commission then provided recommendations on four issues to NPS at their meeting on Feb. 19, 2021, with a Special Visit (SV) set for Spring 2024. In 2022, President Rondeau directed the provost to initiate a review of the provost's organization's mission, functions, and tasks to determine their alignment with NPS's recently revised strategy, vision, and mission. Additionally, the provost was directed to streamline operations and flatten the organization's hierarchy. The new organization was expected to fully support the major functional areas identified as the president's guiding priorities: People, Education, and Research. The review produced a new organizational structure designed to provide greater transparency and clarity, as well as to balance hierarchy and access, especially to support interdisciplinary education and research. It is within the context of this new organizational structure that the 2024 Special Visit took place (Feb. 28-March 1).

Accreditation history

The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) operates under the authorities granted in U.S. Code 10 Chapter 8548, which requires maintaining regional accreditation. In 1955, the Commission approved the university's candidacy for accreditation as a specialized institution, followed by re-accreditation in 1960. NPS had its accreditation re-affirmed in 1962 as a liberal arts institution. The most recent reaffirmation cycle was initiated in 2020 using WSCUC's new Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR). It is important to note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic the Naval Post Graduate School was one of the first institutions using TRP to have a *remote* institutional review visit. This review concluded with the

re-affirmation of accreditation for NPS in February of 2021, with a requirement for a Special Visit (SV) on four issues, in spring 2024.

Summary of Issues

As a result of the reaffirmation of accreditation visit in 2021, the WSCUC Commission required NPS to respond to the following issues in preparation for the SV in February of 2024.

Issue 1: Develop common or related metrics and standards through an institution-wide approach to assessment with the goal of developing program learning outcomes and evaluating student learning outcomes across the organization. (CFR 2.6, 4.1, 4.3)

Issue 2: Seek resources necessary to effectively accomplish its vision and mission, especially those that enable NPS to hire specialized and diverse faculty and staff and modernize facilities. (CFR 1.4, 3.1, 3.5)

Issue 3: Continue inclusion and diversity efforts that are informed by best practices and assessment data on recruitment, onboarding and retention of faculty, staff, and students. (CFR 3.1)

Issue 4: Publish a vision, mission, and strategic plan that is aligned with the Education for Seapower Strategy (E4S) with institutional goals and measures of performance and effectiveness to be used to allocate resources and guide future planning. (CFR 1.1)

B. Description of Team's Review Process

The Special Visit (SV) peer evaluation team reviewed all materials provided by the institution including the SV Institutional Report and appendices, Commission action letters, and additional materials requested by the team before the site visit as well as materials received during the visit. The site visit was focused on the four issues noted above. Throughout the process, the team found the ALO, the ALO's staff and institution's staff to be responsive to requests for information.

The SV team (the chair, assistant chair, and two other members) began its work by discussing materials initially provided by NPS during a team video conference on January 18, 2024. The customary phone call by the Team Chair with the President and Provost was held on February 1, 2024, to discuss any current conditions or circumstances that the team should be aware of during the visit. These meetings shaped the SV schedule for the special visit which began on the afternoon of February 28, 2024 with a team meeting followed by a campus visit which took place the next day and concluded with an exit meeting with the team, the NPS President, and other institutional representatives the following morning, March 1, 2024. The campus visit on February 29, 2024 included meetings with executive leaders, other administrators, a small group of students and alumni and a few faculty and staff. These meetings

allowed team members to better understand the progress NPS had made on the SV issues. In addition, the team reviewed communications sent to the confidential e-mail account set up for the review.

No special follow-up related to substantive change was conducted in connection with this visit.

C. Institution's Special Report: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence

The team found NPS's Special Visit (SV) Institutional Report (IR) to be informative, addressing the institutional context, especially the major changes in the NPS organizational structure since 2020, and efforts to address each of the four issues of concern. Considering the recent pandemic, the significant organizational restructuring in academic affairs, and the accompanying changes in academic affairs personnel, the report briefly highlighted initial efforts by the campus to address each issue.

Report preparation began in early 2023 when the ALO, the Director of Assessment, and the Director of Institutional Research met with WSCUC Vice Presidents Mark Goor and Stephanie Huie for training on the Special Visit and the Institutional Report. A steering committee of ten individuals (five from Academic Affairs, two faculty associates and three from the Chief Operating Officer's unit) was formed to prepare the report under the direction of the provost and chaired by the new ALO (who at the time was also the vice provost for Academic Affairs). The committee determined steps and a timeline and assigned a campus leader with a subcommittee to address each issue. The Issue 1 subcommittee was led by the Director of Assessment; Issue 2 by the Chief Operating Officer; Issue 3 by the Vice Provost for Academic Leadership; and Issue 4 led by the Vice Provost of Academic Affairs/ALO). Offices and units associated with each issue were engaged to collect information on actions taken, results and next steps. A draft version of the report was shared with the President for feedback. NPS then completed and submitted the Special Visit (SV) report to WSCUC on December 21, 2023.

Subsequently, additional information for Issues 1, 3 and 4 was requested by the team before the SV: 1). For issue 1 a request was made for examples of student learning outcomes for courses as well as program learning outcomes (PLOs) and assessment of those PLOs. A file with the current Course Learning Outcomes in the Student Information System (about 10% of courses) and a few examples of Program Learning Outcomes (ESRs) were then provided for the team; 2). For issue 3 a demographic profile by gender/race/ethnicity for both on the ground and DL students, staff and faculty, a copy of the task force report on faculty salary, minutes from the Inclusion and Diversity Council (IDC) from last spring/this fall and a faculty recruitment manual that incorporates new hiring instructions were requested. The demographic profiles and Faculty Salary Decision Memo were provided. IDC minutes were not available and the new hiring instructions are under review with the command; and 3). For issue

4 a request was made for documents/roadmaps for the three other pillars of the strategic initiative like the one for the Education Pillar. At the time of the SV these documents were still being developed by the leads of the respective areas.

After the request for additional information, the SV schedule was developed, in collaboration with NPS, for the one-day visit on Thursday, February 29, 2024. It consisted of a series of scheduled interviews that focused primarily on various members of the NPS community's knowledge and perceptions of the development of the various plans for each of the four issues, their implementation, and the impact of efforts.

SECTION II – TEAMS'S EVALUATION OF ISSUES UNDER THE STANDARDS

A. Issue 1: Develop common or related metrics and standards through an institution-wide approach to assessment with the goal of developing program learning outcomes and evaluating student learning outcomes across the organization. (CFR 2.6, 4.1 and 4.3)

Statement of Evidence Reviewed

Prior to the visit, the evidence reviewed by the team included the NPS Special Visit Report and associated supporting documents. The report laid out the NPS organizational structure, the assessment structure and process, as well as the institution's assessment strategy and draft institutional learning outcomes. Other topics covered in the report consisted of various methods of indirect assessment to include information pertaining to alumni surveys, alumni interviews, student focus groups and new program review processes. Much of the indirect evidence is summarized in Appendix 08, the Curriculum Assessment Dashboard. This document provides a helpful visual representation of student attitudes toward their educational experience at NPS as well as direct assessment scores from students' capstone research projects. Supporting documentation included appendices on the NPS organization, the Education Pillar Implementation Roadmap, draft ILOs, the Curriculum Review Instruction and a copy of the Curriculum Assessment Report (CAR) template. And there was a completed CAR prepared by one of the academic programs going through Curriculum Review. Upon request, the institution supplied further documentation including a sample list of Educational Skill Requirements (ESRs) for three academic programs, and a spreadsheet listing current course learning outcomes.

Analysis of Effectiveness of Institutional Actions in Response to the Commission's Concerns

At the time of the initial accreditation visit in October of 2020, there was essentially no academic assessment program in place at NPS, or at least none that was documented. Assessment was entirely within the purview of the academic department with little to no oversight by the broader institution.

During interviews with faculty, there was some anecdotal “evidence” that assessment was done but, again, no documentation was provided.

Since the visit in October 2020, one area of progress noted is the development of the Curriculum Assessment Dashboard. Approximately 75% of the dashboard is devoted to reporting student opinions and attitudes regarding their educational experience at NPS. The other 25% reports on the scores from the Capstone Research project. Apart from listing the research projects assessed and their scores, there is no analysis of results, and it isn’t apparent from what is presented on the dashboard, how this can be used as a diagnostic tool to improve student learning. In terms of developing and documenting a process for assessing student attainment of program learning outcomes, there has been much less progress than the team expected given that the initial visit occurred over three years ago.

This lack of progress is partly explained by the fact that the position of assessment director, designed to oversee academic assessment, was not filled until October 2022, a full two years after the accreditation site visit. And soon after their arrival the individual was assigned two additional responsibilities, which resulted in the assessment efforts being deprioritized. As a result, assessment practices remain within the departments without any institutional oversight or policies. The individual hired for this position left the institution in January 2024, a month before the SV.

It is not clear whether this position will be rehired. There was mention made during the SV interviews that assessment duties would be folded permanently into the duties of the existing position of Director of Institutional Research and Decision Support (IRDS) or another person in this office. The team did not have the opportunity to meet with the Director of IRDS as they were out sick during the team’s visit, however, the team did meet with one of the members of the IRDS office. Given the amount of work required to bring the assessment program to the point it needs to be to satisfy WSCUC standards, choosing to not fill the vacant position of Assessment Director will present significant challenges to launching a viable assessment program.

In addition to the Curriculum Assessment Dashboard, another improvement is in the development of a Curriculum Assessment Report (CAR). The intent is for programs to submit this report every two years as a part of the curriculum review process. The report is meant to document the assessment of one Educational Skill Requirement (ESR) of the program’s choosing. The CAR appears to be an effective means of documenting assessment results and actions; however, one drawback is the intent is only to assess one outcome per curriculum review cycle. As of the time of this site visit, only one program has completed a CAR as part of their curriculum review. NPS leadership has indicated that the CAR will be more widely implemented later this spring with programs going through the curriculum review process.

It is the recommendation of this review committee that between now and the next WSCUC review, NPS provide documentation that this implementation has taken place, and that this assessment process is being sustained.

During interviews with NPS leadership and faculty, a recurring talking point was the emphasis on the curriculum reviews with the Navy program sponsors that occur once every two years. In fact, most efforts to discuss program learning outcomes assessment with the leadership and faculty led to them steering the conversation back to these reviews. Discussions revealed that the two-year cycle of these visits is variable as the reviews are dependent on the availability of the Navy sponsor to meet with the program's coordinator and faculty. While these curriculum reviews are a valuable source of information for program improvement, the team is concerned that these curriculum reviews are primarily reactive in nature rather than proactive. For instance, should the Navy major program sponsor have no feedback for the program, it is not clear that there is any other documented feedback mechanism that provides data that is used for improving student learning outcomes. What is needed is an institution wide process for assessing program learning outcomes to identify areas where students are excelling and falling short in attaining the learning outcomes identified for each program, to improve student learning.

The academic programs at NPS are grounded in Educational Skill Requirements (ESRs), which in turn are derived from Core Skill Requirements (CSRs). According to the NPS Instruction 1550.1G, CSRs are the "set of quantifiable skills, traits, and experiences that a subspecialist must possess to perform acceptably in a coded billet." Going further, the instruction states that "the ESRs define the educational objectives which, combined with academic requirements mandated by accreditation standards allow officers to perform effectively in a given subspeciality-coded billet." While the ESRs contain valuable detail regarding what students are expected to know as part of their education, they are too lengthy and detailed to serve as effective program learning outcomes (PLOs) by themselves. The assessment effort at NPS would benefit from having program coordinators, using the ESRs as a base and developing three to five program learning outcomes that are straightforward statements of what students will be expected to demonstrate. It should be stressed that the idea is NOT to replace ESRs with PLOs, but rather develop PLOs to supplement the ESRs and serve as a more effective assessment outcome.

In addition, there appears to be no regular cycle for the assessment of program learning outcomes. Roughly every other year, programs going through curriculum review will choose one outcome to assess and report on that assessment in the CAR. Apart from that, there do not appear to be plans to cycle through all the program learning outcomes/ESRs on a routine, predictable basis. Consequently, it is likely that some outcomes might never be assessed.

It appears that well-crafted, institutional learning objectives have not been formally established or agreed upon. That is, they are still in draft form, more than three years after the Oct 2020 reaffirmation visit. Also, while there are some metrics related to each of the four institutional learning outcomes, there do not appear to be any benchmarks associated with these institutional outcomes nor does it appear that any data have been collected on these metrics, or at least no data were provided for the team to review. Consequently, it is not possible to ascertain the institution's progress in realizing these outcomes. Perhaps what may be most concerning is that programs, curricula, and even some courses do not have student learning outcomes. Finally, interviews during the SV lead the team to conclude that although there is some evidence of student learning outcomes assessment in engineering programs that are ABET accredited or those that are accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) there is not a strong base of assessment awareness, knowledge, or experience among the broader academic leadership and faculty at NPS. And there was no evidence there is any infrastructure in place to provide guidance, support, or oversight of assessment practices.

Findings and Conclusions

In summary, some initial steps have been taken to address the Commission's concerns, as described above. However, much work remains to be done for NPS to meet the WSCUC standard on learning outcomes assessment as specified in the 2021 Commission's notification on Issue 1: Develop common or related metrics and standards through an institution-wide approach to assessment with the goal of developing program learning outcomes and evaluating student learning outcomes across the organization. (CFR 2.6, 4.1,4.3)

B. Issue 2: Seek resources necessary to effectively accomplish its vision and mission, especially those that enable NPS to hire specialized and diverse faculty and staff and modernize facilities. (CFR 1.4, 3.1 and 3.5)

Statement of Evidence Reviewed

The evidence reviewed by the team regarding Issue 2 included both documentation and perceptions of key stakeholder during campus interviews relative to the development and outcomes of the 2023 Faculty Compensation study and the design and implementation of the Campus Modernization Plan, June 2021 (IR: Appendix 11).

Analysis of Effectiveness of Institutional Actions in Response to the Commission's Concerns

In response to this issue, in 2022, NPS developed and implemented a Navy Programming, Planning, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) approach to budgeting across the university. This replicates the

Department of Defense's (DOD) method of aligning resources to validated requirements and evaluating execution based on those resources. A requirements-based budget based on PPBE allows NPS to participate in the Navy's overall planning and budgeting process, requesting additional resources when necessary. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 budget was the first year of a requirement-based budget based on PPBE. It identified (1) a \$5.9M shortfall in faculty labor resources and (2) resources needed for a dedicated NPS laboratory modernization and sustainment strategy. This new budget process has provided significant transparency to the NPS resource sponsor (Office of the Chief of Naval Operations - OPNAV N7) and has enabled a better match of funding to the strategic goals for Navy education. The questions addressed during the SV were: What are the results so far of (1) the overall faculty labor budget increase of \$6.2M in FY 2025 and (2) the \$18.7M allocation through FY 2029 for laboratory spaces and equipment.

Faculty Labor Resources Increases and Resulting New Faculty Pay Structure

According to the NPS Institutional Report (IR) for the SV, labor budget increases have thus far resulted in the funding of 21 staff positions in areas such as Equal Opportunity, Safety, Financial Management, Human Resources, Information Systems, and oversight and administrative support. These staff positions are necessary for NPS to meet its Department of Defense (DOD) compliance and regulatory responsibilities. Three additional Human Resources positions to support the hiring and onboarding of faculty have been created and will be funded in FY 2025.

Specific to faculty labor budget increases, a market analysis of the University of California (UC) system (as peer institutions) was conducted and an NPS task force developed a new faculty pay structure.

The new pay structure went into effect on October 1, 2023, after broad socialization with the academic units across campus. While it will take some time to fully implement the new faculty pay structure it represents an important step in addressing a major equity issue at NPS.

NPS Laboratory Modernization and Sustainment

NPS and the Navy have identified and resourced a dedicated NPS laboratory modernization and sustainment strategy. In a significant investment by the Navy, \$18.7M has been allocated through FY 2029 for laboratory spaces and equipment. As a result, NPS is amid a multi-year facility modernization strategy. The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) Campus Modernization Plan (Appendix 11) details the results of extensive field investigation, stakeholder interviews, a student survey, and a two-week collaborative planning charrette at the Naval Support Activity Monterey (NSAM).

The Campus Modernization Plan reported that over sixty stake holders attended the planning charrette during which the planning team and stakeholders discussed spatial requirements, including offices, study spaces, laboratories, classrooms, and other shared spaces such as conference rooms. Some 155 students responded to a user survey that included questions to help define priorities for the renovated facilities. This information was used to establish a planning vision with related goals and design patterns. (*In support of the NPS mission, the planning vision is to create modern buildings that are adaptable, safe, and transparent*, from the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) Campus Modernization Plan, Appendix 11.)

The Installation Development Plan (IDP) has thus far identified the need to modernize the following essential buildings: Bullard Hall is undergoing an extensive renovation project that has already completed 70% of its components, including every office, lab, and classroom, with an expected completion of Summer 2024; The Dudley Knox Library Restricted Research Space started its expansion in October 2023, with an expected completion Spring 2024; Construction on the Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering Laboratory located at the NPS Engineering Annex will begin in 2024.

For fiscal year 2025, NPS has started to receive funding to begin the renovation of Halligan Hall (Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering), followed by Spanagel Hall (Physics, Mathematics, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Oceanography), Root Hall (Meteorology, Information Sciences, Defense Analysis), Ingersoll Hall (Defense Management), and the Dudley Knox Library.

The total campus modernization cost is estimated to be between \$308M – \$400M. This financial commitment by the Navy represents a significant investment in the future of NPS. At the time of the SV subsequent modernization projects are ready to be implemented (i.e., *executable*), pending the allocation of funds by the Navy.

Findings and Conclusions

The institution has made considerable progress in addressing Issue 2. In anticipation of the reaccreditation visit in 2030 NPS should document the continued development and implementation of an equitable faculty pay structure and the implementation of the Campus Modernization Plan. This will provide the evidence needed to show their success related to the 2021 Commission’s notification on Issue 2: Seek resources necessary to effectively accomplish its vision and mission, especially those that enable NPS to hire specialized and diverse faculty and staff and modernize facilities. (CFR 1.4, 3.1, 3.5)

C. Issue 3: Continue inclusion and diversity efforts that are informed by best practices and assessment data on recruitment, onboarding, and retention of faculty, staff and students. (CFR 3.1)

Statement of Evidence Reviewed

The evidence that was reviewed by the team for Issue 3 consisted of a brief narrative in the Institutional Report (the IR included Appendix 13, “The Inclusion and Diversity Council Charter”), additional documentation requested by the team and information from interviews of campus leaders and others members of the campus community (administrators, a very few faculty, and a small group of students and alumni) who had knowledge of and perceptions related to campus efforts addressing this issue. Five campus efforts were highlighted in the IR with two of them dealing with aspects related to recruitment, onboarding and retention of students, faculty or staff (Inclusion and Diversity Council, Deputy Equal Employment Opportunity Officer); one of them focused on employee retention (Mother’s rooms), two others dealt with recruitment and onboarding of students and faculty (STEM Scholarship for Service (S4S) Program, new faculty hiring instructions). An additional initiative, focused on student retention (an emerging Center for Student Success), was described during the visit.

Analysis of Effectiveness of Institutional Actions in Response to the Commission’s Concerns

The equity and inclusion efforts described in the IR were conducted over a thirty-three-month period in the context of the pandemic and a major reorganization of academic affairs at NPS. Importantly, this reorganization included elimination of the college structure and the role of deans and associate deans.

Inclusion and Diversity Council

This council was reactivated as a key step to addressing Issue 3 with a revised charter (approved by the President and Provost, as of January 2023). The charter specifies key tasks for the Council: a). the development of a diversity and inclusion strategy; b). communication with senior leadership on trends, problems, issues and/or concerns and recommended solutions; c). evaluation and analysis of workforce data, policies, and practices to identify and address barriers to equal opportunity; d). the review of recruitment practices for employees and with recommendations for improving resources used to reach minorities, women, veterans and individuals with disabilities and e). monitoring and evaluation of the organizational climate survey plan of action and provide advice to the President on progress in implementing actions in conjunction with the NPS Command Resiliency Team (CRT).

Importantly, this reactivation led to a change in membership that makes the council more inclusive by adding students, staff, and faculty (including a representative from the Faculty Council’s DEI subcommittee). The charter, with its specific tasks, positions NPS to proceed with an intentionality that includes faculty, students, and staff, to make an impact on equity and inclusion throughout the institution. A critical task, to be completed within the next six months is the development of a diversity and inclusion strategy that is data informed (examples include use of campus climate survey data, the

Department of Defense dashboard, and a recent faculty survey) and best practices informed (council members and other academic leaders have engaged with local, regional, and national professional development opportunities and will continue to do so). This strategy should include a plan, a timeline and measurable outcomes that will be formulated with wide engagement from campus constituents and will ultimately have Presidential approval. Explicitly connecting the diversity and inclusion strategy to the newly revised NPS mission will enhance the delivery of a high-quality education for all NPS students. In addition, this will also have a positive impact on scholarship and research at NPS (specifically new knowledge production and the institution's emphasis on interdisciplinary efforts) (See WSCUC Equity and Inclusion Policy and CFR 1.4).

Deputy Equal Employment Opportunity Officer (DEEOO)

Approval was granted in this period for this position, with the hiring process currently ongoing after a failed first search effort. The position reports to the President and will have responsibilities to oversee the Equal Employment Opportunity Office (EEOO), diversity programs and provide advice to NPS' faculty, staff, and senior administrators. This position is included as a member of the Inclusion and Diversity Council. It has the potential to positively impact the recruitment, onboarding and retention of faculty, staff, and students. (CFR 1.4)

Mother's Rooms

Six Mother's rooms, in buildings throughout the campus, were established to be used by women who are nursing (students, employees, guests). The establishment of these rooms is an important demonstration of the institution's commitment to tangibly addressing a faculty, staff, and student need. This initiative also serves as an example to the campus community of initiative planning and execution and can demonstrate a commitment to ongoing improvement when assessment of the impact of the initiative is undertaken. (CFR 3.2)

STEM Scholarship for Service (S4S) Program

The STEM Scholarship for Service (S4S) Program is a new program, funded by a grant from the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering. Its' purpose is to recruit recent baccalaureate graduates from Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Serving Institutions and thus promote diversity in the Department of Defense (DOD) STEM civilian workforce. The program guarantees employment within the DOD upon successful completion of an NPS graduate degree. The program is well underway in its first year of operation. With one dedicated staff person, 50 applicants (recent baccalaureate graduates) were identified, and four students were recruited into the

program. The participants of this program represent a different student type than most NPS students (who are older adults—civilians or enlisted) and thus they have different needs for their success. The program’s dedicated staff person has built connections across the institution, especially with the Dean of Students unit, to provide support for program participants. There is interest in expanding the program across all military services and to build a pathway into the doctoral programs at NPS.

This program has had the added benefit of expanding the conversation on campus about “NPS student types” and their support needs. The Dean of Students notes another unusual student type that NPS has had success with, that is, students with non-STEM undergraduate degrees crossing over into graduate STEM programs with the support of NPS’ fast paced STEM refresher courses. This success, supported with data, has the potential to impact future directions for student recruitment at NPS.

Notably, the support for NPS students, and thus their retention, includes a weeklong orientation before classes begin. In addition, during any given quarter, students are supported by their Program Officer, Faculty Associates and Education Technicians as well as personnel in the Dean of Students unit. (CFR 2.12, 2.13)

New Faculty Hiring Instructions

These new instructions provide the basis for a faculty recruitment manual. They include attention to best practices such as consideration of the membership of the search committee, training for the search committee, expanding the range of advertising for positions with central administration funding, and an emphasis on the importance of diverse pools of candidates. The revised new faculty hiring instruction is currently being used in its first cycle of recruitment and hiring, led by the HR unit, working with the office of Academic Leadership. The goal of this effort is to increase the diversity of candidate pools, as well as to establish a search process that positively contributes to faculty onboarding and thus their retention. Importantly, the HR unit is also developing a new data system to track key aspects of searches (e.g. diversity of candidate pools), the hiring process (e.g. acceptance and declinations of job offers), and faculty retention, with the intention of using this data to improve processes and inform planning efforts. In addition, the office of Academic Leadership has developed and offers a robust onboarding process for faculty that includes a substantial orientation and ongoing faculty development throughout the new faculty’s first year. The emerging strategic plan for the Academic Leadership unit includes the fostering of mission driven hiring and faculty professional development throughout the career cycle of faculty, including the role and development of academic department chairs.

NPS executive leadership indicates a renewed focus on “investing in people” that also includes a focus on staff recruitment, their onboarding and retention. (CFR 3.1, 3.2,3.3)

Emerging Student Success Center

Initial efforts were described to the team towards establishment of a Student Success Center and is a result of a collaboration between the Dean of Students and the Vice Provost for Academic Leadership. The emerging center focuses on student needs identified in a student survey. One important need now being addressed is learning disabilities. Funding is being sought to expand these efforts.

Findings and Conclusions

NPS has made noticeable progress in addressing Issue 3. In anticipation of the reaccreditation visit in 2030, the following steps are suggested. First, NPS should document the Inclusion and Diversity Council’s (IDC) implementation of its diversity and inclusion strategy and its progress on the other tasks assigned to the IDC with data and ongoing improvement activities based on these data. Second, NPS should document the EEO office plans and activities and the impact of using data to make improvements. Third, student recruitment, onboarding, and retention efforts including the STEM Scholarship for Service (S4S) Program should be thoroughly documented. And fourth, faculty and staff recruitment, onboarding and retention efforts should be fully described including the hiring plans, data on their impact and ongoing improvement activities based on these data. This will provide the evidence needed to determine success related to the 2021 Commission’s notification on Issue 3: Continue inclusion and diversity efforts that are informed by best practices and assessment data on recruitment, onboarding, and retention of faculty, staff and students. (CFR 3.1)

D. Issue 4: Publish a vision, mission, and strategic plan that is aligned with the Education for Seapower Strategy (E4S) with institutional goals and measures of performance and effectiveness to be used to allocate resources and guide future planning. (CFR 1.1)

Statement of Evidence Reviewed

This section describes NPS’ efforts, and the team’s assessments of those efforts, regarding Issue 4. It is based on review of the Institutional Report and its Appendices, additional documentation that was provided and interviews with campus leaders, other administrators, and a few faculty and staff members.

Analysis of Effectiveness of Institutional Actions in Response to the Commission’s Concerns

NPS Vision

The NPS vision statement is: “The Naval Postgraduate School will become the nation’s leading institution for defense higher education and applied research, delivering transformative solutions and innovative leaders for decisive U.S. Seapower and national defense.”

The vision statement is appropriately aspirational. It was not clear to the team how the institution knows it is advancing towards the vision, for example, comparing itself to other institutions “for defense higher education and applied research.” The team suggests that as part of the NPS assessment plan for its strategic Framework, it include an analysis of peer institutions to help assess progress toward its stated Vision.

NPS Mission

The NPS Mission statement is: “To provide defense-focused graduate education, including classified studies and interdisciplinary research, to advance the operational effectiveness, technological leadership, and warfighting advantage of the Naval service.”

Given the importance of the mission statement and how it communicates an institution’s essential task and purpose, often institutions of higher learning have mission statements that are clearly focused on and describe its product, the student. The NPS Mission as currently stated and without context may convey emphasis on faculty (as opposed to on students) – “who provide defense--focused graduate education,” etc.

The team asked NPS leaders how the change in the NPS mission impacted the institution, in other words, what difference(s) the change made at NPS. The team also asked how they knew if the mission was being achieved. NPS leaders did not have clear responses for either question. The team noted that the subtitle of the strategic plan, “Vision and Strategic Framework,” did not include the mission, that is, the mission is not part of the framework.

Note that one of the supporting objectives within the NPS Framework is to “develop and implement Institutional Learning Outcomes that represent the core mission of NPS and align with the desired outcomes of graduate education for the Navy and Marine Corps”. This is to be completed by the end of FY24 since that NPS’ ILOs are still only in draft form. The team suggests that to operationalize the mission NPS should deliberately connect words and phrases of its mission to elements of its Framework and to the institution’s learning outcomes (ILOs). Then when NPS assesses its Framework and supporting ILOs, it would also be able to document achievement of its mission.

The team also suggests utilizing the post-graduation survey as one of the measures to assess the purpose defined in the NPS mission, “to advance the operational effectiveness, technological leadership, and warfighting advantage of the Naval service”.

NPS Strategic Plan with Institutional Goals

In January of 2023, the NPS President released the Vision and Strategic Framework plan “Cognitive Readiness and Intellectual Leadership for Decisive Maritime Advantage.” The NPS Institutional Report noted that “individual strategic plans are being developed for the four areas identified in the strategic Framework: education, research, innovation, and institution.” For the SV, NPS did provide one “implementation plan” for the first area, education. The report also noted that “a portfolio of iterative plans will be created and implemented over a period of 1-5 years to allow NPS to realize its strategic vision of becoming an institution that provides transformative solutions and innovative leaders in support of U.S. Sea power and national defense.”

The Education Implementation Roadmap clearly provides a roadmap that highlights one to two-year objectives, two-to-three-year objectives, and three-to-five-year objectives. For each objective there are subordinate objectives, for example, the first objective of the five has nine subordinate objectives. For all five objectives there are over 100 subordinate objectives and milestones. The team expressed serious concerns to NPS leaders about feasibility and sustainability of the first plan, and ultimately for the implementation of all four areas within the NPS Vision and Framework. The team suggests that NPS prioritize and reduce the number of objectives and subobjectives, and that this Education Roadmap also includes how NPS defines and operationalizes its ILOs and mission statement.

The team found that the use of key terminology in the Framework, Education Implementation Roadmap, and Institutional Report, and sometimes used by NPS leaders, was not consistent and clear. For example, the four areas of the NPS Framework were referred to as core dimensions, pillars, and priorities. There was also reference to North Stars, future states, strategic framework objectives, ways, means, and desired outcomes. The team suggests that NPS clarify and reduce its terminology in its implementation plans.

Another important area of strategic planning is who is responsible for what and when during implementation. The team met with the four identified leads for each of the Framework areas, some of whom briefly described their efforts. These leads noted how they rotate throughout the month presenting topics from their areas at one of the senior leading meetings. When asked for evidence of these presentations the team was provided with hardcopy of several presentations. After later review of

these materials, the linkage to the Framework areas and supporting objectives was not clear. The team acknowledges that this may be because three roadmaps have not yet been completed.

The team asked for and received a listing and description of the different regular meetings of administrators with the President and Provost. It was not clear after reviewing this inventory when and where the discussions of the Framework areas occur.

The NPS Institutional Report states that the director of the assessment will lead the development and implementation of an integrated campus wide assessment, planning and effectiveness programs that align with the institution's mission and priorities. The team learned of the resignation of this person just prior to the team's visit and during the visit of the merging of these assessment responsibilities into the Office of Institutional Research Decision Support (IRDS). Given the capacity of this Office, it was not clear how this Office would be able to lead the assessment of the Framework and of the assessment of ILOs and PLOs.

Measures of Performance and Effectiveness

NPS did not provide the results of any assessments of its Framework, areas, and supporting objectives. For the Implementation Education Roadmap presented, the team was not clear on the difference between key performance indicators and pillar key performance indicators used throughout the roadmap, and why some supporting objectives had assigned indicators, and some did not. Like the sustainability challenges mentioned above, the team suggests reducing the number of indicators, currently over 20 for one of the four Framework areas, to a more manageable number. This reduction would need to occur after the suggested reduction in the number of objectives.

Many of the indicators presented were measures of performance, often used to assess if an effort was completed, and if so, how well. The team suggests that as part of prioritizing its assessments, NPS consider indicators that measure effectiveness, or if the desired end state or goal or outcome was achieved.

Used to Allocate Resources

A way to assess if a strategic plan is being used to allocate resources is to determine if assessments of the plan are informing change that requires resourcing. Since NPS did not provide any assessments of its Framework, the team was not able to evaluate if and how the Framework is being used to allocate resources. During team interviews leaders did say anecdotally that the Framework helps prioritize resources during senior leader meetings.

The NPS Institutional Report states that in 2022, NPS implemented a Navy Programming, Planning, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) approach to budgeting across the university. NPS provided a decision memorandum dated May 17, 2022, with the subject: NPS PPBE. In that memo, paragraph 1d states that “the reviews assess actual execution performance based on goals and strategic objectives.” The team suggests that the NPS strategic planning, assessment, and resourcing become fully integrated into the PPBE process.

Guide Future Planning

An indicator to the team that the NPS Framework is guiding institutional planning is its Communication Strategy, for which it is to be commended. The team found that the concept of the Communication Strategy is well aligned to the NPS Framework. The Strategy maintains an annual execution cycle that includes:

- NPS President’s Annual Intent. Prioritizes efforts for the coming year. For example, the 2024 Intent described four different areas with approximately 10 more specific areas.
- Biannual Mission Impact Report. Provides “by the numbers” for the four pillars, education, research, innovation, and institution. This type of information along with the exemplary efforts achieved, is an excellent way of demonstrating how the strategic pillars help guide the institution.
- Annual Report and Mission Measures. This publication describes by month, significant achievements. The Mission Measures provided include current leadership, degrees awarded, faculty and staff numbers, research numbers, program enrollment, student enrollment, etc.

The team suggests that the three products above more explicitly connect to the Framework and implementation plan, including assessments.

Findings and Conclusions

Overall, the team found that NPS addressed the first part of Issue 4 in that it developed and published a new mission, vision, and strategic plan, namely, NPS Vision and Strategic Framework. The team did not find that NPS sufficiently addressed the latter part of the issue “measures of performance and effectiveness to be used to allocate resources and guide future planning.” Thus, the team advises that NPS develop and implement measures of performance and effectiveness of the Vision and Strategic Framework. This will address the second part of the 2021 Commission’s notification on Issue 4: Publish a vision, mission, and strategic plan that is aligned with the Education for Seapower Strategy (E4S) with institutional goals and measures of performance and effectiveness to be used to allocate resources and guide future planning. (CFR 1.1) (CFR 4.6).

SECTION III – OTHER TOPICS, AS APPROPRIATE

The team suggests that campus academic leaders, including the ALO, consider participating in professional development opportunities about accreditation offered by WSCUC.

SECTION IV – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings

The specific findings related to each of the four Special Visit (SV) issues are described throughout this report. Special Visit team findings summarized here concern the following questions (1) to what extent have the organizational restructuring, new resources and budgeting process, assessment strategy, and staffing changes been implemented, (2) to date, what has been their impact on the institution and individuals, and (3) what are reasonable expectations for their future evolution and impact?

Retired Vice Adm. Ann E. Rondeau was appointed president of the Naval Postgraduate School on January 29, 2019. Soon after her arrival, and during the pandemic period Spring 2020 to Spring 2021, she led the institution through the successful 2020 Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR) of Accreditation. The TPR was conducted remotely in October 2020 and was followed in March 2021 by the WSCUC Commission notifying NPS of the four issues that have guided this SV Issue 1: Institution-Wide Approach to Student Learning Outcomes Assessment; Issue 2: Resources to Effectively Accomplish its Vision and Mission; Issue 3: Equity and Inclusion in Recruitment, Onboarding, and Retention of Faculty, Staff and Students; and Issue 4: Goals and Measurement of Strategic Planning Impact on Institutional Effectiveness. The team's findings are embodied in the following commendations and recommendations.

Commendations

The team commends the Naval Postgraduate School for the following:

- Development and implementation of a planning and budgeting process to secure resources to accomplish the mission and vision (Issue 2).
- Initial implementation of an inclusive and comprehensive campus modernization plan (Issue 2).
- Initial efforts of the inclusion and diversity council, that with expanded membership have positioned the institution to strategically address diversity, inclusion, and equity (Issue 3).

Recommendations

The team recommends that the Naval Postgraduate School address the following related to:

Issue 1: Develop common or related metrics and standards through an institution-wide approach to assessment with the goal of developing program learning outcomes and evaluating student learning outcomes across the organization. (CFR 2.6, 4.1 and 4.3)

1. Implement clearly stated institutional, program, and course level learning outcomes that are integrated and aligned with the institution's mission. (CFR 2.6, 3.1, 4.1, 4.3)
2. Develop and sustain an institution wide approach to student learning outcomes assessment that documents evidence of improved educational effectiveness. (CFR 2.6, 3.1, 4.1, 4.3)
3. Ensure sufficient faculty and staff support to develop and sustain the assessment of student learning outcomes. (CFR 2.6, 3.1, 4.1, 4.3)

And on Issue 4: Publish a vision, mission, and strategic plan that is aligned with the Education for Seapower Strategy (E4S) with institutional goals and measures of performance and effectiveness to be used to allocate resources and guide future planning.

1. Develop and implement measures to assess the impact of the Vision and Strategic Framework (CFR 1.1).