WASC Senior College and University Commission  
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Dear WSCUC Commissioners,

Thank you for partnering with us in our commitment to providing the finest graduate research education possible to the military and civilian students we serve. We appreciate the time and experience of the peer reviewers who gave us a thorough and praiseworthy review.

The time we spent in identifying and describing our themes and in preparing for the remote review was well-spent, in that we were able to take the time to dig deeper into our own processes—an invaluable opportunity for a relatively new President and Cabinet. But even greater learning emerged from our remote review. In allowing us to see ourselves through new eyes, the WSCUC Team partnered with us to find opportunities to make both our daily operations as well as our long-term strategy, even stronger. For that, we are profoundly grateful.

As always, we remain firmly committed to our purpose—the delivery of defense-oriented education to military and government civilian men and women. The academic achievement and professional development of our students remains foremost in all our efforts. We further dedicate ourselves to the ongoing pursuit of improvement in institutional outcomes, efficiency of operations, and most importantly, excellence in all we do for students, faculty, staff, and all the populations we serve.

Thank you for noting our strengths in student services, faculty development, curriculum reviews and innovative, cutting-edge research. I am particularly proud of our student services organization, and the wrap-around service we are able to provide to students from the time they receive orders until they leave Monterey. Our curriculum reviews are also often noted as a best practice. We have continued to grow in the areas of faculty development and research, and it is gratifying to have our hard work noted by the Commission and a Team of such depth and breadth of experience and understanding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The team made four recommendations concerning our current and planned operations. They were clear and appropriate in all cases. We have plotted our course forward on all of them, as described below.

a. **Recommendation 1:** Develop and implement an institution-level structure with responsibility for assessment coordination and oversight, that integrates department, school and command assessment processes and results. (CFR 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 4.1, 4.3)
(1) This recommendation relates to several observations from the Review Team related to assessment practices (pp. 11, 12, 16, 21), Institutional Research (pp. 13, 21) and data management (pp. 12, 13).

(2) NPS is establishing a designated Academic Assessment and Accreditation coordination position under the Provost. This Academic Assessment Office will have responsibility for planning and coordinating university-wide activities related to academic assessment, academic program review, and educational effectiveness, across NPS' graduate schools and academic departments. The position will also chair the next evolution of the Accreditation Steering Committee which led us through our reaccreditation cycle—the Academic Assessment, Accreditation and Review Committee (AAARC). The AAARC will include representation from all the NPS schools and academic departments and will support the Academic Assessment Office in planning, developing, coordinating and supporting NPS' programs and processes for assessment of teaching and student learning. The holder of this position will act as NPS' ALO to WSCUC, and will assist with the further development of academic assessment expertise at NPS.

(3) The Academic Assessment Office will coordinate with other offices at NPS currently involved in assessment activities, both at the institutional level, as well as in the schools and departments. In particular, at the institutional level, the Assessment Office will engage with Institutional Research (developing assessment measures), with the Office of Teaching and Learning (developing faculty assessment expertise), with the newly established Command Data Officer (integrating institutional data from NPS' business operations) and with the Provost, Vice Provost and Associate Provosts (supporting assessment practices in their domains). The Assessment Officer will work with the AAARC, and the schools and academic departments to assure the maintenance of department-level assessment plans and programs.

(4) A significant focus of the Academic Assessment Office in the near term is to work with both Institutional Research and the Command Data Office to drive advocacy for, and governance of, appropriate and innovative use of data. NPS has an unrelenting commitment to data driven decision-making. This partnership between the offices of Academic Assessment, the Command Data Officer, and Institutional Research allows for coordination of the data-driven efforts of both the academic and business elements of NPS, and strategic use of data to enhance and propel the organization forward. Our overall purpose in this area is to ensure that NPS' teaching and learning assessment processes are comprehensive, with discussion, agreement, clarity, and communication on the objectives, measures, and assessments of all aspects of an NPS education, from courses to curricula.

b. **Recommendation 2:** Seek resources necessary to effectively accomplish the NPS vision and mission, especially those that address competitive faculty and staff salaries and facility modernization. (CFRs 1.4 and 3.1)
(1) Through our internal research, we have determined that NPS is not uniformly competitive across disciplines for senior tenure track faculty ("full" professors) or across all tenure track ranks in specific disciplines (e.g., Management) because of the federal employee salary cap, as it is applied to NPS. NPS will continue to seek legislative relief, although with the understanding that this has a low probability of success.

(2) Consequently, NPS is already implementing additional ways of remaining competitive with faculty compensation, to include: expanding the use of retention, recruitment, and relocation incentives; expanding the use of monetary performance awards; and enabling the creation of endowed chairs. Additionally, NPS is expanding the use of non-salary awards, such as providing more support to distinguished faculty members in the form of funds that can be used to support research assistants or "buy-out" teaching. NPS Human Resources is working with Faculty Affairs to publish new awards guidance in 2021. This guidance will address both monetary and non-monetary awards for faculty.

(3) For the recruitment of junior faculty, NPS is expanding its use of a student loan repayment program and looking to provide higher levels of support for new faculty and their research programs. Recruitment, Relocation, and Retention (3Rs) incentives are already authorized; however, Faculty Affairs will set aside additional funds for these types of incentives.

(4) NPS initiated a facilities modernization study in September 2020. With final design certification due in March 2021, the initiative is gaining momentum as Naval Leadership is briefed on results. We currently anticipate Navy funding for an expansion of the Classified spaces in four major buildings and the Library. NPS has already received approval for over $22 million to renovate one of its buildings.

(5) As a further result of the E4S Initiative, NPS received $3.4M in funds to update and replace outdated equipment while adding research and teaching capabilities focused on the 21st century warfighter’s needs, in areas aligned to the NPS Strategy and the National Defense Strategy. NPS used these funds to purchase over 145 pieces of laboratory equipment in all.

c. **Recommendation 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)

(1) NPS has significantly increased its focus on inclusion and diversity since 2018 and will continue its efforts in this area. An important element of this effort was the stand-up of the Inclusion and Diversity Council (IDC) as a research and advisory body to NPS leadership. To date, the IDC has issued three reports—on the gender makeup of committees (chairs, members, and selectees); on the relationship of gender and faculty salaries; and on the possibilities of naming places, buildings, and rooms on campus after a more diverse set of individuals. Notably, with the first two studies, the IDC did not find any gender differences for salaries across NPS
faculty and that committee representation and selections were proportionate to the overall gender breakdowns. The IDC continues to work on other reports that will be completed in 2021, including a study on retention and a study on performance awards. Additional topics for study are continually assessed by the IDC. In 2020, NPS has: dedicated itself to expanding faculty recruitment to traditionally under-represented communities through greater advertising in affinity group websites; more fully trained search committees (by human resources officers and ethics counselors) to be aware of implicit bias; called for greater diversity among search committees; created a new Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Committee on the Faculty Council; expanded diversity leadership classes; improved mentorship; and more. Additionally, the post-Covid world will create additional opportunities for diversity, including more robust and diverse hiring pools attracted by NPS’s strategic use of remote work to attract highly qualified, but unmovable, traditionally underrepresented candidates as both teaching and research Faculty. Inclusion and diversity will continue to be a priority and NPS efforts are reflecting that.

d. **Recommendation 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).

(1) While there are many aspects of the E4S Study/Report that depend on larger Navy organizational developments, requirements and decisions, NPS continues on a trajectory that manifests many of the E4S intentions. These intentions, in particular, complement our institutional goals and measures of performance and effectiveness, relative to prospective resources and future planning that have become clearer, more enduring, more pressing and more transformational over the past year.

(2) With stronger institutional norms and practices in place, and a wider aperture of opportunity ahead, recent years have provided enormous advantage toward moving forward in transformative ways. What has been learned, analyzed, discerned and executed will inform our vision and strategic plan for the way ahead.

(3) The NPS mission was revised in 2020 by NPS and approved by the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations to reflect more accurately what we do and how we deliver our products and services in ways that distinguish NPS as unique and distinctive. NPS’ new mission statement is:

*The Naval Postgraduate School provides defense-focused graduate education, including classified studies and interdisciplinary research, to advance the operational effectiveness, technological leadership and warfighting advantage of the Naval service.*

(4) This new mission statement has ensured enhanced focus on the core elements of being responsive, interdisciplinary, applied, innovative, classified, and secure.
(5) Clearly, our vision needs to be adjusted to the environment and imperatives in front of us; namely, advancing and synchronizing graduate education and applied research with student operational experience and faculty expertise so that we can increase the Navy’s return on investment. We are embarking on a deliberate and deeply considered update to our Strategic Plan in January 2021. This will include many of the considerations included in the E4S Study, such as a more flexible education model based on different and variable modes of delivery, from distance to residence. It will also include a focus on more diverse offerings, to include PhDs/Masters degrees, certificates, short courses, hybrid courses, different approaches to practica and applied research, and various means to aggregate graduate degrees along a continuum of lifelong learning for qualified officers, enlisted, and civilians (E4S Report p. 66). We will specifically articulate in our updated Strategic Plan that we: 1) are a global platform, 2) provide problem-oriented education, 3) are integrative, 4) provide lifelong relationships, 5) are multi-domain, 6) provide blended and interdisciplinary educational experience, 7) focus on learning by doing (rather than learning to do), and 8) gain cognitive advantage. Throughout the revision to our Strategic Plan, we will detail our pervasive intention to lean forward diligently in discerning and meeting the requirements of learning and applying new knowledge, keeping in mind the strategic environment that the E4S Report described as, “The Cognitive Age.”

(6) In this regard, the overlap between the TPR Themes and E4S requirements has been and will continue to be very useful. Despite the anticipated challenges of the next few years, we have specific plans that will allow us to not only respond to the challenges, but also fashion from them, opportunities.

(a) Sub-Theme One: Curriculum 2020. The revised Strategic Plan of 2021 will consider not only how the content of our curricula is updated through regularly-scheduled curricula reviews, but it will also take into account the resources of workforce, time, and funds needed to redesign and update curricula. It will further discuss the diverse ways in which we will deliver curricula going forward, with the persistent outcome of deepening the ability of our graduates to discern, decide and act (E4S Report, pp. 11-13). The Strategic Plan will specifically address assessment and evaluation to ensure that learning and teaching assessment processes are comprehensive, with discussion, agreement, clarity and communication on the objectives, measures, and assessments of all aspects of the NPS education mission, from courses to curricula.

(b) Sub-Theme Two: Classroom 2020. Our Strategic Plan will demonstrate our commitment to enhancing teaching and learning through various means, including the work of our Teaching and Learning Commons (TLC). NPS has also developed a facilities recapitalization plan. We have engaged with an Architecture and Engineering firm and the Department of the Navy to design buildings that are adaptable and safe. Included in this strategic planning for the campus are key considerations such as the requirements of modern labs, common spaces, energy efficiency, enhanced classified capability, flexible classrooms, collaborative spaces, and aesthetic cohesion with the Monterey Peninsula. The strategic focus of all modernization efforts will be on capability over capacity.
(c) **Sub-Theme Three: Colleagues 2020.** Clearly, Faculty development is core to the overall excellence of NPS. Our Strategic Plan addresses this, and several strategic initiatives in this area have come out of the offices of the President and Provost. The intent is to reconsider the “Faculty of the Future” in terms of development, incentives, practice, delivery models, opportunities, mobility, intellectual contributions, and overall advancement. This is essential as we embrace new kinds of Faculty – both younger and more experienced—who are interested in the work of graduate education and application of knowledge toward real outcomes. We will continue the work of optimizing and leveraging our faculty and practitioner students toward even greater national impact. An area of actualized focus for interdisciplinary and cross-campus synergisms has been the development of the Naval Warfare Studies Institute and the increased activity of our various interdisciplinary Centers.

(7) There are expected as well as unique challenges to all these things to include:

(a) Constrained resources and changing expectations by the Navy/Marine Corps

(b) Understanding and translating a competitive environment that can make other graduate education options seem desirable

(c) Communicating the value of a unique organization like NPS

(d) Identification of and connection to faculty and experts working in potentially synergistic areas, due to a culture of siloes

(e) Managing and leveraging toward positive outcomes the myriad effects of COVID-19 on the education and applied research experience and core mission of NPS

(8) NPS leadership is aware of these challenges and is actively engaging in pro-active, forward-leaning, objective and optimistic ways of handling and optimizing challenges as opportunities.

(9) NPS’ next phase will reflect what it has always sought to accomplish: currency and relevance. The intent in the Cognitive Age is that NPS’ next phase will be transformative in ways that will further distinguish its value to intellectual rigor, adaptive innovation and application-focused creativity and invention, for our clients and for the nation.

**PIONEER EXPERIENCE**

a. NPS appreciated the opportunity to be one of the “Pioneers” in the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR). When TPR was initiated in 2017, and continuing today, NPS has been an enthusiastic supporter and participant in this approach. NPS was encouraged to identify areas of focus/themes that were of particular interest and value to NPS and improve the institution by
virtue of attention to these themes. NPS’ three themes were each related to the then-recently completed NPS Strategic Plan (2018). NPS identified a set of actions and initiatives from the Strategic Plan most directly related to the improvement and development of our core graduate education programs, areas from the Strategic Plan that were expected to have the most direct impact on our students’ learning experience. Focusing on our themes under the TPR approach has allowed NPS to make substantive improvements to NPS’ academic programs, to the benefit of our students.

b. Perhaps of interest to WSCUC—inspired by TPR, NPS modified its own Academic Program Review (APR) process to include a thematic element. The NPS APR is a periodic department level review conducted by external evaluators. In the APRs conducted during the past couple of years, we have requested/allowed academic departments to focus on particular themes of their own choosing, areas where the faculty wanted to devote attention in order to improve the department’s programs. Similar to NPS’ experience with TPR, the departments found this thematic approach of significant value.

c. As a Pioneer, NPS found both interest and satisfaction in working with WSCUC during the past three years to “create” the TPR process as an alternative approach to accreditation. NPS thanks WSCUC for the experience.

d. NPS’ experience of TPR was, perhaps, somewhat unusual due to the large number of unexpected external factors. We were selected for the TPR program just as we were called to consider a new strategy and new leadership. We eagerly awaited the Accreditation Resource Conference (ARC) to clarify the TPR process and aid us in networking and planning, and it was cancelled due to COVID-19. Also due to COVID, we were one of the first Pioneers to have a remote review for our Institutional Visit.

Despite these challenges, participation in the TPR aided us in executing and responding to a new strategic plan. It allowed us, even in the midst of a “perfect storm” of distractions to stay focused on our specific strategic goals; mindful of our ever-strengthening culture of assessment; cohesive in our emphasis on institutional outcomes. We are a stronger University for having had benefit of this process, and we are tremendously appreciative of the effort expended to create this experience for the betterment of NPS.

Sincerely,

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