

Idaho State UNIVERSITY

Office of the President
921 South 8th Avenue, Stop 8310 • Pocatello, Idaho 83209-8310

December 18, 2014

President Sandra E. Elman
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
8060 165th Ave. NE
Suite 100
Redmond, WA 98052


Dear President Elman,

Idaho State University (ISU) appreciates the opportunity to provide a written response to the final Year Seven Peer Evaluation Report for the Board Commission review. Our response is attached.

Should you have any additional questions regarding our written response, you may contact our Provost, Dr. Laura Woodworth-Ney (woodlaur@isu.edu or 208-282-2171), or our Accreditation Liaison Officer, Ms. Selena M. Grace (gracsele@isu.edu or 208-373-1874).

Your support for higher education is very much appreciated. I look forward to seeing you at the Commission's meeting on January 8.

Best Regards,



Arthur C. Vailas, Ph. D.
President

cc: Dr. Laura Woodworth-Ney, Provost
Ms. Selena M. Grace, Accreditation Liaison Officer
Dr. Mike Rush, Executive Director, Office of the State Board of Education
Ms. Emma Atchley, President, Idaho State Board of Education

Idaho State University (ISU) would first like to thank the Year 7 Peer Review team who conducted our site visit. We appreciate the time and energy they committed to our evaluation. Additionally, we would like to thank the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) Commissioners for the opportunity to respond to the Year 7 Peer Review recommendation. We are compelled to remind the commission that ISU's Year 7 Report was conducted on an accelerated timeline wherein ISU submitted its Year 1 report in fall of 2011, which required ISU to revise its mission to ensure the mission and core themes aligned. The Idaho State Board of Education approved ISU's revised mission and core themes in February of 2012. ISU received a waiver for the Year 3 report, and the Year 7 report was due to NWCCU in fall of 2014. In essence, ISU completed a seven year comprehensive evaluation in less than two years; not nearly the time required to fully ensure establishment of appropriate indicators for determining mission fulfillment.

Recommendation 1. The evaluation committee recommends that the institution either revise its mission statement or review and revise its core themes, indicators, and benchmarks/targets to ensure that they encompass the entirety of the present mission statement. (Standard 1.B.1)

1.B – Core Themes

1.B.1 The institution identifies core themes that individually manifest essential elements of its mission and collectively encompass its mission.

ISU Response to Recommendation 1:

While Idaho State University believes that our mission statement could be streamlined and there is some philosophical or visionary language contained therein, we disagree that either our mission statement or core themes need to be revised as it relates to Standard 1.B.1., rather we believe this recommendation should have tied to Standard 1.B.2. that requires “The institution establishes objectives for each of its core themes and identifies meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement that form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives of its core themes.”

Under Standard 1.B.1., core themes are only required to “individually manifest *essential elements* [eph. added] of its mission and *collectively encompass* [eph. added] its mission.” ISU's four core themes are the *essential elements* of our mission that *collectively encompass* the depth and breadth of the services we provide. We are unclear how the four core themes of Learning and Discovery, Access and Opportunity, Leadership in the Health Sciences, and Community Engagement and Impact do not collectively encompass the essential elements of our mission? The Peer review team found that our core themes:

“are aligned with the mission, but they do not encompass sufficient breadth so that mission fulfillment can be fully assessed. For example: there was no core theme that considered, or evidence in the report to indicate, an assessment of the degree to which students have developed or will develop skills to ‘learn from the past, think critically about the present, and provide leadership to enrich the future in a diverse, global society.

Similarly, the core theme on community engagement and impact, outside of healthcare, does not flow seamlessly from the mission” (pg. 3).

ISU believes Core Theme One: Learning and Discovery addresses the “learn from the past, think critically about the present” and that Core Theme Three: Leadership in the Health Sciences addresses the “provide leadership to enrich the future in a diverse, global society.” With regard to Core Theme Three: Community Engagement and Impact, it is directly derived from the language in our mission that includes “Idaho State University serves and engages its communities with health care clinics and services, professional technical training, early college opportunities, and economic development activities.” All areas of which we have indicators related to the assessment of mission fulfillment.

ISU does believe, related to Standard 1.B.2., that requires “The institution establishes objectives for each of its core themes and identifies meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement that form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives of its core themes,” there is need to revise our indicators and establish stronger thresholds for mission fulfillment. As indicated in Idaho State University’s Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report, benchmarks will be set as part of a new strategic planning process that will begin in late January 2015. With regard to the statement that “there is no defined threshold as to what constitutes acceptable achievement of the mission or of the core themes,” ISU seeks clarification from the NWCCU as to what demonstration of mission fulfillment looks like? If this is a campus-based determination, then is it sufficient for an institution to simply have established benchmarks for all core theme objective’s indicators? And, is it a requirement that all indicators be quantitative; or, is it acceptable to have 10-20 percent of the indicators qualitative? Further, what is the expectation of NWCCU for institutions to determine what percentage of benchmarks must be met for determination of mission fulfillment? Is it the expectation of NWCCU that institutions clearly state that we must meet 60, 75, 90 or 100 percent of our benchmarks to meet mission fulfillment?

Recommendation 2. The evaluation committee recommends that the institution build upon its present governance framework by promoting an environment of transparency and collegiality, resulting in trust that encourages the expression and consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which they have a direct and reasonable interest. (Standard 2.A.1)

2.A.1 The institution demonstrates an effective and widely understood system of governance with clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Its decision-making structures and processes make provision for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which they have a direct and reasonable interest.

Idaho State University seeks further specificity with regard to the statement that “the present environment is not meeting its potential for meaningful dialog, thus hindering the efficient operation of governance at the institution” (pg. 7). ISU believes that we meet the requirement to demonstrate an effective and widely understand system of governance as represented by the faculty councils as specified in page 56 of the Idaho State University Year Seven Self-Evaluation, and who operate with approved bylaws. The present framework is promoting an environment of collegiality and trust as demonstrated by the successful implementation of program prioritization. Further, ISU believes its decision-making structures and processes make provisions for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students and a significant example of this was our program prioritization efforts. This was an area commended by the peer review team, wherein they indicated “The Program Prioritization Process . . . also demonstrates the institution’s ability to engage the internal environment in a discussion of a significant and potentially polarizing review” (pg. 29). Further, Commendation 4 indicated ISU “engaged faculty, department heads, professional staff and administrators in a thoughtful, comprehensive, and inclusive process. It yielded information that appears to be guiding planning, budgeting, and strategic reallocation. It was accomplished collegially and is potentially a model for continuous improvement and achievement of mission fulfillment” (pg. 30). ISU is committed to working with stakeholders to increase the lines of communication across the advisory system.

Recommendation 3. The evaluation committee recommends that the institution complete all campus plans and integrate them into a comprehensive planning process. (Standard 3.A.1)

3.A– Institutional Planning

3.A.1 The institution engages in ongoing, purposeful, systematic, integrated, and comprehensive planning that leads to fulfillment of its mission. Its plans are implemented and made available to appropriate constituencies.

Related to Recommendation 3, Idaho State University provided a response to errors of fact contained in the draft report (copy of which is attached as Appendix B); however the revised final draft still contains inaccuracies. ISU noticed on page 21, third paragraph under Standard 3.A., references to three plans for which we would like to provide further clarification.

The following paragraph of the report indicates:

While the strategic planning process and the budgeting and budget planning processes are well coordinated, the relationships between other ISU plans and the strategic plan are less clear. There are a number of such plans at ISU that are relevant to comprehensive planning (e.g., Emergency Response Plan, Complete College Idaho Plan, and a Master Plan which has not been formally adopted). However, nowhere in the Self-Evaluation Report is there a description of how all of these plans are considered in a comprehensive planning process.

In response to the above paragraph, ISU seeks to clarify three points related to the three plans referenced. First, ISU does not believe the referenced Emergency Response Plan is a plan that lacks or requires integration within the campus constituencies. Related to the specific comment that “the relationship between other ISU plans and the strategic plan are less clear” ISU does not believe the role of the Emergency Response Plan should be integrated with strategic planning or mission fulfillment. ISU believes there will be *plans* developed in various units across campus that are internal to their roles and responsibilities and/or external requirements, but that simply because something is called a *plan* doesn’t necessitate integration into the strategic plan.

Second, ISU seeks to clarify that the Complete College Idaho Plan is not an ISU plan, but rather an Idaho State Board of Education plan, as referenced on page 298 of Idaho State University’s Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report. The strategies identified in the Complete College Idaho Plan are integrated into the budgeting process (demonstrated in Appendices 16 and 17 of the self-evaluation report), strategic planning process both at the Idaho State Board of Education and institution level (copies of which can be found in Appendix 5 and the link on page 51 in response to Eligibility Requirement 4 of the self-evaluation report), and program prioritization process which resulted in the development of ISU’s Program Viability database and web application. The Program Viability database and web application is the data tool utilized by colleges and campus leadership for inputs into strategic planning and budgeting process.

Third, ISU seeks to also clarify that the integration and application of the Master Plan referenced in the self-evaluation report on page 151 will be part of the upcoming campus-wide strategic planning process.

Therefore, ISU believes that we are in compliance with this standard in that our budgeting and strategic planning process are annual, systematic, implemented and made available to appropriate constituencies. In fact, ISU referenced multiple times throughout the report that we would be undergoing a comprehensive strategic planning process that would begin in January 2015 to update the strategies, indicators and benchmarks of our strategic plan.

Recommendation 4. The evaluation committee recommends that the institution establish effective processes to ensure that ongoing, systematic assessment of the achievement of desired outcomes is used to inform and strengthen programs and services. (Standard 4.A)

4.A – Assessment

- 4.A.1 The institution engages in ongoing systematic collection and analysis of meaningful, assessable, and verifiable data—quantitative and/or qualitative, as appropriate to its indicators of achievement—as the basis for evaluating the accomplishment of its core theme objectives.
- 4.A.2 The institution engages in an effective system of evaluation of its programs and services, wherever offered and however delivered, to evaluate achievement of clearly identified program goals or intended outcomes. Faculty have a primary role in the evaluation of educational programs and services.
- 4.A.3 The institution documents, through an effective, regular, and comprehensive system of assessment of student achievement, that students who complete its educational courses, programs, and degrees, wherever offered and however delivered, achieve identified course, program, and degree learning outcomes. Faculty with teaching responsibilities are responsible for evaluating student achievement of clearly identified learning outcomes.
- 4.A.4 The institution evaluates holistically the alignment, correlation, and integration of programs and services with respect to accomplishment of core theme objectives.
- 4.A.5 The institution evaluates holistically the alignment, correlation, and integration of planning, resources, capacity, practices, and assessment with respect to achievement of the goals or intended outcomes of its programs or services, wherever offered and however delivered.
- 4.A.6 The institution regularly reviews its assessment processes to ensure they appraise authentic achievements and yield meaningful results that lead to improvement.

Idaho State University seeks clarification on which of the six standards in Standard 4.A. this recommendation relates to. Pursuant to the requirements in Standard 4.A.1, ISU “engages in ongoing systematic collection and analysis of meaningful, assessable, and verifiable data. . .as the basis for evaluating the accomplishment of its core theme objectives.” This process is conducted in several ways. The first of which is our annual strategic planning process as referenced in response to Standard 3.A.1-4. on page 161 of Idaho State University’s Year Seven Evaluation Report. Idaho State University has maintained an ongoing strategic planning process within the parameters of the Board requirements for several decades. The current strategic plan has been a rolling strategic plan, as required by the Board, and has undergone significant updates annually since 2010. The first series of updates included the addition of ISU’s core themes, with yearly

changes mandated by the Board based on their yearly review and changing priorities. In April 2012, after the Board approved ISU's revised mission and core themes in February 2012, Academic Affairs leadership in conjunction with the vice presidents, the deans, and Accreditation Steering Committee revised its strategic plan to align with the mission, core themes, and the Board's strategic plan. Evaluation of our core theme indicators are integrated into this annual process.

The second is through the recently implemented program prioritization process that resulted in the development of the Program Viability database and web application that is used to support strategic and core theme planning, and budget decisions. The Program Viability data provides immediate, on-demand access of program performance and financial data to Vice-Presidents, Deans, and Chairs.

Pursuant to requirements in Standard 4.A.2, that: "The institution engages in an effective system of evaluation of its programs and services, wherever offered and however delivered, to evaluate achievement of clearly identified program goals or intended outcomes. Faculty have a primary role in the evaluation of educational programs and services," ISU believes we are in compliance and feel this is further supported by the language on page 24 of the draft report, where the Peer Review team indicated that

"The evaluation team confirmed that faculty are the primary source of input into academic program review, curriculum development and the curriculum approval process. There is a regular timeline for program review. The coordination of the processes for program assessment and program review have recently been centralized in the Provost's Office to provide consistency in compliance and outcomes and an institutional perspective."

Pursuant to the requirements in Standard 4.A.3., that "The institution documents, through an effective, regular, and comprehensive system of assessment of student achievement, that students who complete its educational courses, programs, and degrees, wherever offered and however delivered, achieve identified course, program, and degree learning outcomes. Faculty with teaching responsibilities are responsible for evaluating student achievement of clearly identified learning outcomes," ISU believes we have further work to do in this area. While all academic courses have clearly identified student learning outcomes, assessment of student learning outcomes is inconsistent across the programs. We have worked to formalize and centralize this process, and it was approved by the Council of Deans in Summer 2014.

Pursuant to Standards 4.A.4-6., ISU believes that this is in part addressed through our response to Standard 4.A.1. above, and further addressed in response to Standard 3.A.1-4, pages 161-163 of Idaho State University's Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report.

Recommendation 5. The evaluation committee recommends that the institution develop and implement a process of ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes for its General Education program. (Standard 4.A)

Idaho State University seeks clarification that this recommendation is related solely to Standard 4.A.3.:

“The institution documents, through an effective, regular, and comprehensive system of assessment of student achievement, that students who complete its educational courses, programs, and degrees, wherever offered and however delivered, achieve identified course, program, and degree learning outcomes. Faculty with teaching responsibilities are responsible for evaluating student achievement of clearly identified learning outcomes.”

However, ISU feels that if this recommendation is solely related to our General Education Program, we believe this recommendation should rather fall under Standard 2.C.10., which requires:

The institution demonstrates that the General Education components of its baccalaureate degree programs (if offered) and transfer associate degree programs (if offered) have identifiable and assessable learning outcomes that are stated in relation to the institution’s mission and learning outcomes for those programs.

If that is the case, ISU confirms our commitment to develop and implement on-going student assessment for our General Education Program. As was indicated in the self-evaluation report, ISU recently completed a revision of our general education requirements. The campus was scheduled to work on student learning outcomes this prior year, but this process was put on hold as the State Board of Education developed and implemented policy specific to general education learning outcomes statewide. We anticipate moving forward on student learning outcomes related to general education in the coming year.

If Recommendation 5 is related to anything in Standard 4.A., we ask that you see our response to Recommendation 4 above.

Recommendation 6. The evaluation committee recommends that the institution use the results from assessment of core themes, programs, services, and student learning for institutional improvement. (Standards 4.B.1, 4.B.2)

4.B – Improvement

- 4.B.1 Results of core theme assessments and results of assessments of programs and services are: a) based on meaningful institutionally identified indicators of achievement; b) used for improvement by informing planning, decision making, and allocation of resources and capacity; and c) made available to appropriate constituencies in a timely manner.
- 4.B.2 The institution uses the results of its assessment of student learning to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices that lead to enhancement of student learning achievements. Results of student learning assessments are made available to appropriate constituencies in a timely manner.

Idaho State University concurs with this recommendation, and provided several areas that have already been identified in response to our Year Seven Self Evaluation Report on pages 273-283.

Recommendation 7. The evaluation committee recommends that the institution use assessment results based on a comprehensive set of indicators to determine mission fulfillment and sustainability. (Standard 5.A.1, 5.A.2, 5.B.)

5.A – Mission Fulfillment

5.A.1 The institution engages in regular, systematic, participatory, self-reflective, and evidence-based assessment of its accomplishments.

5.A.2 Based on its definition of mission fulfillment, the institution uses assessment results to make determinations of quality, effectiveness, and mission fulfillment and communicates its conclusions to appropriate constituencies and the public.

5.B – Adaptation and Sustainability

5.B.1 Within the context of its mission and characteristics, the institution evaluates regularly the adequacy of its resources, capacity, and effectiveness of operations to document its ongoing potential to fulfill its mission, accomplish its core theme objectives, and achieve the goals or intended outcomes of its programs and services, wherever offered and however delivered.

5.B.2 The institution documents and evaluates regularly its cycle of planning, practices, resource allocation, application of institutional capacity, and assessment of results to ensure their adequacy, alignment, and effectiveness. It uses the results of its evaluation to make changes, as necessary, for improvement.

5.B.3 The institution monitors its internal and external environments to identify current and emerging patterns, trends, and expectations. Through its governance system it uses those findings to assess its strategic position, define its future direction, and review and revise, as necessary, its mission, core themes, core theme objectives, goals or intended outcomes of its programs and services, and indicators of achievement.

In response to Standards 5A.1-2, Idaho State University disagrees with this finding. It is somewhat challenging to demonstrate that over a two year process your campus undergoes “regular, systematic, participatory, self-reflective, and evidence-based assessment” when a year of that process was devoted to campus-wide program prioritization, but we believe we have addressed this requirement. In fact, the peer reviewers indicated on page 28 of the Evaluation Report that “ISU does engage in high quality evidence-based assessment and uses the results to inform decision-making.” The program prioritization effort resulted in the development of the Program Viability database and web application that will be utilized for on-going assessment. Further, ISU will be updating the campus strategic plan commencing in January 2015. As indicated in response to Recommendation 4, ISU has maintained an ongoing strategic planning process within the parameters of the Idaho State Board of Education requirements for several decades. The current strategic plan has been a rolling strategic plan, as required by the Board, and has undergone

significant updates annually since 2010. The first series of updates included the addition of ISU's core themes, with yearly changes mandated by the Board based on their yearly review and changing priorities. In April 2012, after the Board approved ISU's revised mission and core themes in February 2012, Academic Affairs leadership in conjunction with the vice presidents, the deans, and Accreditation Steering Committee revised its strategic plan to align with the mission, core themes, and the Board's strategic plan. Evaluation of our core theme indicators are integrated into this annual process.

In response to Standards 5.B.1-3, ISU disagrees that we are not meeting these standards. ISU believes that meeting Standards 3.A.1-4: Institutional Planning are integrally a part of Standards 5.B.1-3, and as indicated in our response to Recommendation 3 above, we are meeting these requirements. Additionally, there were no recommendations related to Standards 3.A.2-4 indicating we are not meeting these requirements. Further, as requested, we believe clarification to the questions posed in our response to Recommendation 1 would address how to proceed with more clearly specifying the expectation for mission fulfillment.

Appendix A: Mission & Core Themes

ISU Mission Statement and Core Themes The Mission of Idaho State University is to advance scholarly and creative endeavors through the creation of new knowledge, cutting-edge research, innovative artistic pursuits and high-quality academic instruction; to use these achievements to enhance technical, undergraduate, graduate, and professional education, health care services, and other services provided to the people of Idaho and the nation; and to develop citizens who will learn from the past, think critically about the present, and provide leadership to enrich the future in a diverse, global society.

Idaho State University is a public research institution which serves a diverse population through its broad educational programming and basic, translational, and clinical research. Idaho State University serves and engages its communities with health care clinics and services, professional-technical training, early college opportunities, and economic development activities. The University provides leadership in the health professions and related biomedical and pharmaceutical sciences, as well as serving the region and the nation through its environmental science and energy programs.

Core Theme One: Learning and Discovery. Idaho State University promotes an environment that supports learning and discovery through the many synergies that can exist among teaching, learning, and scholarly activity.

Core Theme Two: Access and Opportunity. Idaho State University provides opportunities for students with a broad range of educational preparation and backgrounds to enter the University and climb the curricular ladder so that they may reach their intellectual potential and achieve their goals and objectives.

Core Theme Three: Leadership in the Health Sciences. Idaho State University values its established leadership in the health sciences with primary emphasis in the health professions. It offers a broad spectrum of undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate training. We deliver health-related services and patient care throughout the state in its clinics and postgraduate residency training sites. We are committed to meeting the health professions workforce needs in Idaho. We support professional development, continuing education, and telehealth services. We are active in Health Sciences research.

Core Theme Four: Community Engagement and Impact. Idaho State University, including its outreach campuses and centers, is an integral component of the local communities, the state and the Intermountain region. It benefits the economic health, business development, environment, and culture in the communities it serves.

Appendix B:
Response to draft report for errors of fact from
Idaho State University President Arthur C. Vailas, Ph.D.

Idaho State UNIVERSITY

Office of the President
921 South 8th Avenue, Stop 8310 • Pocatello, Idaho 83209-8310

November 12, 2014

Dr. Paul Reichardt
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
8060 165th Avenue N.E.
Suite 100
Redmond, WA 98052

Dear Dr. Reichardt,

Idaho State University (ISU) appreciates the opportunity to review the draft Year Seven Peer Evaluation Report for errors of fact. We appreciate all of the work and time that went into producing the report, and also into the site visit.

Idaho State University found a few factual errors in the written report, which are detailed below.

ISU noticed that on page 21, third paragraph under Standard 3.A., references to three plans that are in error: Enrollment Management Plan, Retention Plan, and Academic Plan.

The following paragraph of the report indicates:

While the strategic planning process and the budget and budget planning processes are well coordinated, the relationships between other ISU plans and the strategic plan are less clear. There are a number of such plans at ISU—some completed (e.g. Emergency Response Plan), some incomplete (e.g., Master Plan, Enrollment Management Plan, Retention Plan), and some still in the inception stages (e.g., Academic Plan).

In response to the above paragraph, ISU's Year 7 report makes no reference to an Enrollment Management Plan that is referenced as incomplete. This is not a requirement of Standard 3.A., and ISU has not developed such a plan at this time.

ISU's Year 7 report does reference recruitment and retention plans on page 276, and those are developed and managed at the college level, under the direction of the Office of Academic Affairs. ISU's Year 7 report makes no reference to a campus-wide Retention Plan that is referenced as incomplete. ISU uses the Idaho State Board of Education's Complete College Idaho plan (<http://www.boardofed.idaho.gov/cci.asp>) as the basis for its retention planning,

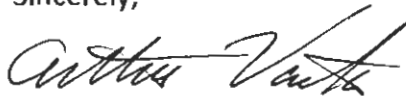
Dr. Paul Reichardt
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and is actively working with the Office of the State Board of Education to review and possibly revise the Complete College Idaho Plan. A Retention Plan, however, is not a requirement of Standard 3.A.

ISU's Year 7 report does reference a Five-year Academic Plan on page 91 under Standard 2.C.1., but that plan is managed and mandated by the Idaho State Board of Education (http://www.boardofed.idaho.gov/public_col_univ/five_year_plan.asp). The Five-Year Plans are fully operational and have been in existence for three years; prior to being the Five-Year Plans, these plans were referred to as the Eight-Year Plans, and had been in existence for many years. ISU's Year 7 report makes no reference to a campus-wide Academic Plan that is referenced as in the inception stages.

We thank you for the opportunity to correct these error of fact. Should you have any additional questions regarding these points, please contact either our Provost, Dr. Laura Woodworth-Ney, or our Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness, Ms. Selena Grace.

Sincerely,



Arthur C. Vailas, Ph.D.
President

cc: Dr. Laura Woodworth-Ney, Provost
Ms. Selena Grace, Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness