

**REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM  
SPECIAL VISIT**

To: Fresno Pacific University

Date of Visit  
March 13 - 15, 2024

Team Roster

Team Chair: Michael Beals, President, Vanguard University

Team Assistant Chair: Ester Rogers, Dean, California Institute for Human Science

Team Members:

Chris Procello, Analyst (Fresno State) and by the WSCUC Senior College and Univ

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 letter 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, Accreditation History, as relevant, and Visit

Fresno Pacific University (FPU) began as an educational extension of The Mennonite Brethren Church in 1941 and was founded in Fresno, California as Pacific Bible Institute in 1944. The Bible Institute was granted accreditation as a two-year institution by WASC in 1948. With the addition of a liberal arts curriculum to the biblical studies core, accreditation as a four-year liberal arts institution was granted by WASC in 1963, concurrent with a change of name to Pacific College. For the next 30 years, enrollment demographics and academic programs expanded until the College changed its name to Fresno Pacific University in 1997. In addition to the 50-plus acre main campus in Fresno, regional campuses were added across the San Joaquin Valley in the 2000s. In 2008, the Department of Education designated FPU as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Dr. Joseph Jones served as president from July 2017 to June 2022 and Dr Andre Stephen has served from July 2022 to the present.

The mission statement of FPU reads: “Fresno Pacific University develops students for leadership and service through excellence in Christian higher education.” That mission is manifested through a foundational commitment to ‘The Fresno Pacific Idea’ which “commits it to be: 1) a Christian university dedicated to God's Kingdom and to the

and clearer communication channels. The institution was reaccredited in 2022 for 8 years, with a Special Visit scheduled in 2024 which is the subject of this report, and the next full Accreditation Visit scheduled in 2030 (Offsite Review in Fall 2029).

The Spring 2024 Special Visit addressed the following items:

- a. Issue 1: Accelerated progress on diversity, equity, and inclusion
- b. Issue 2: Program Review Processes
- c. Issue 3: Faculty's collective responsibility for assessment

## **B. Description of Team's Review Process**

The Special Visit team for Fresno Pacific conducted two zoom calls in preparation for the Special Visit on March 13 – 15, 2024. The first team meeting occurred on February 13, 2024, and covered the Special Visit process, team assignments, the team worksheet and a draft of the Special Visit schedule. Before the team conference call, the team reviewed the FPU Special Visit Report and filled out the SV Team worksheet for each of their areas. The assistant chair compiled the team's feedback into a composite worksheet for the team to review during the conference call. The second team meeting occurred during the week of the Special Visit on March 12, 2024. During the second team meeting, the team confirmed writing assignments and the visit schedule, reviewed evidence, and identified additional materials that were needed by the team in preparation for the visit.

The Special Visit was conducted March 13 – 15, 2024. The team was able to meet with the following individuals/groups for interviews during their visit: President Stephens, the Interim VP of Academic Affairs and Provost, the President's Cabinet, the University Diversity Committee and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Staff, Data Standards and Systems Use Committee (DSSU), the Assessment and Program Review Taskforce (APRT)(ed)-6 ( nt)1.7 (y,JJ0.0)3.1(



responsibilities, authority and reporting relationships of the Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) and operationalizing the CDO job description according to the campus' DEI plan.

This concluding recommendation resulted from the team's observations of and concerns about "a fractured approach" to DEI and the resulting impacts on matters of communication, trust and transparency; the nature of DEI arrangements at the time fostering "turf wars" over implementing DEI initiatives; and deepening a conflict-ridden dynamic that pitted faculty against the administration over FPU's DEI priorities and the tactics used to advance these priorities (p.40 of 2022 Report). The role of the Chief Diversity Officer was highlighted in the 2022 Team Report, with questions raised about this role, who this position was to report to, and how the CDO was to interact with and relate to the University Diversity Committee and Human Resources in terms of roles and institutional authority (p.9 & 39 of 2022 Report). Conflict and uncertainty over the role and direction of the CDO pointed to the absence of "a strong and recognizable accountability system for DEI at FPU" (p.41 of 2022 Report) and that accountability in (b) (5) - 1.6 (n) J02-08

Unfortunately, the campus has yet to hire a Chief Diversity Officer, a role that serves as the center of the FPU DEI strategy. The CDO role will take the form of an Associate Provost of Engagement and Inclusive Teaching and Learning who will report directly t

making process? Or will ultimate decision-making power rest with one, or the other—or with the Provost, or perhaps the President? And what, exactly, is the role of the Faculty Senate in this mix? The President has already led noticeable changes in the campus climate since the 2022 reaccreditation visit. A larger and rejuvenated Cabinet has been established and this Cabinet is self-aware as to the institution being in a different place than it was in 2022. Across multiple stakeholder groups, there is a stated sense of hopefulness, a more emboldened and anticipative mood. The President has been instrumental in creating this fresh ethos that balances awareness of the difficulty of the work with the sentiment that FPU is turning the corner and increasingly able to reach its goals. This was reflected in meetings not only with faculty, staff and administrators but with students as well. A variety of DEI-related concerns were shared when the Team held an open session for students during the 2022 reaccreditation visit. At the March 2024 Special Visit, the team met with a diverse group of students once again, and the level of satisfaction expressed was markedly improved. The students were generally satisfied with FPU's diversity efforts and when asked if they feel safe at FPU, the answer was in the affirmative. It is upon this groundwork of transforming campus climate and culture that the President may build during the transitions to come. In the coming year, FPU is expected to hire both a new Provost and a Chief Diversity Officer (Associate Provost of Engagement and Inclusive Teaching and Learning). The President has a foundational opportunity to clarify the scope and expectations regarding DEI that are essential to the responsibilities and working relationship of a new Provost and a new Associate Provost as they further the demonstrated institution-wide commitment to progress.



these three points, the Team wrote, "The first and most important is the degree of collective faculty ownership, responsibility and participation in quality assurance processes at FPU. Moving forward on these matters, faculty should consider codifying their increased ownership of and involvement in quality assurance processes such as program review and assessment through modifications to the Faculty Handbook." Building on this point, the Team emphasized that as FPU addressed faculty ownership of the program review process and that this ownership must be rooted in a learning and improvement mindset as opposed to a "compliance mindset" (p.7 of 2022 Team Report) and that reflections on program review results be grounded in "a deep understanding" (p.6 of 2022 Team Report) of the issues as opposed to a shallow one. Finally, there was the issue of data quality and in0m8 ( i)1.5ge1.7 (ev a of)2 (1.7 (ei(p)-0.6



While changes to the program review process are solidly underway, evaluation and improvement of issues of data quality and integrity are just now emerging. As noted in their 2024 Special Visit Report, FPU has recently created a structure for addressing these issues; a Data Standards and Systems Use Committee (DSSU) has been formed and consists of three subgroups, the Data Standards Group, the Systems Use Group, and the Oversight Group. The Oversight Group is a coordinating body while the other two subgroups have a narrower scope (i.e., the student information system and data used to measure institutional health and software platforms that ensure the appropriate flow of data and information). In a meeting with the team and the DSSU, it was acknowledged that this work centered on institutional data and data systems was in a “start-up” phase, a phase characterized by planning, organizing, staffing and the like. When asked about the long-term goals of the DSSU, in particular when the group will have reached a steady state marked by more routinization, predictability, monitoring and evaluation that reflects a more evolved state, there was not an immediate consensus. Through conversation, the group arrived at the conclusio

appropriate training of Faculty on the use of the assessment management system; and d.) the development and

training being provided, both in terms of the use of data and templates and in terms of the overall process for assessment from members of the Assessment Committee during the team visit. Several members of the Assessment Committee were returning members who expressed commitment to continuous improvement of the assessment of student learning at FPU. Faculty members also highlighted one of the benefits of the APRT restructuring was the enhanced training of their colleagues on the assessment process and the use of rubrics and data.

It was clear to th