REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM
For Reaffirmation of Accreditation

To

Graduate Theological Union (GTU)

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The team evaluated the institution under the 2013 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 letter are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

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SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

Description of Institution and Reaccreditation Process

The Graduate Theological Union (GTU), located in Berkeley, California, is a graduate-only

institution founded in 1962 and accredited by WASC since 1966. It became accredited by the

Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in 1969.

The Mission Statement as described in the institutional report is to:

- Educate women and men for vocations of ministry and scholarship;
- Equip leaders for a future of diverse religions and cultures;
- Teach patterns of faith that nurture justice and peace; and
- Serve as an educational and theological resource for local communities, the nation, and the world.

Since GTU's inception, although a separately accredited institution, its predominant identity

has been as the hub of a consortium consisting of theological schools as well as interreligious

and interdisciplinary centers and affiliates.The 2023-2024 student catalog states that "GTU is

both a degree-granting institution offering PhD, MA, and certificate programs and a consortium

of interdependent theological schools and centers committed to a partnership with one another."

The GTU consortium currently consists of eight separately accredited theological schools

representing Catholic, Protestant, and Buddhist traditions and five academic centers, and seven

affiliates.

GTU provides the sole PhD within the consortium, sparing individual member schools from

the cost and effort of running their own PhD programs. Graduates from consortium member

schools can apply to GTU's PhD. All tuition revenue from the PhD enrollments belongs to

GTU. The doctoral classes are taught by 14 full-time doctoral faculty employed by GTU and 33

faculty employed by the consortium members. The combined doctoral faculty oversees all

academic aspects of the doctoral program. As of fall 2022, there were 112 enrolled doctoral

students. The fall 2023 entering doctoral class totals 14 students.

GTU offers an MA in addition to the PhD. This MA degree shares courses with the consortium member institutions, but the degree is conferred by GTU. This allows for revenue sharing (90% of revenue from an MA student affiliated with a member school goes to the member school; 10% of revenue from a member-school MA student goes to GTU). Students may choose any one of a number of curricular paths towards earning the common MA, each path consisting of a different selection of courses offered by the member institutions, including GTU. As of Fall, 2022, there were 26 students (18.5 FTE) in this program. In fall 2023, 9 new MA students enrolled (4 from member schools and 5 GTU students). Member school students have a choice of enrolling in this common MA program or enrolling in a separate and potentially competing masters program offered at their institution.

The consortium is governed by a consortial agreement that articulates the structure and relationship of the GTU and its member institutions. Until 2016, GTU provided significant shared services to the member institutions, including financial aid, accounting, IT, and HR. Currently, shared services are limited to the learning management system (Moodle), support for digital learning, coordination of cross-registration, and access and management of a unique theological library. As the independent schools within the consortium have experienced reduced enrollment, two have left the consortium to avoid the annual cost of membership. The changing nature of the consortium raises existential challenges for both GTU as an independent member and as the consortium hub.

Given these changing financial realities of the consortium members, the consortium member schools asked GTU to become less dependent on them for financial support. As a result,

beginning in 2016, the consortial arrangements were changed to remove most of the shared services. The primary shared service today is access to and management of the library.

In part as a response to the changing role of GTU in the consortium and the need to increase its financial independence, the GTU board of trustees adopted a five-year strategic plan known as "GTU 2.0." As described to the team in its meetings with the GTU leadership team, the key goals of the plan are to grow enrollment, establish and grow a new non-credit program (referred to as GTUx), increase revenue through gifts and grants, and monetize and refurbish its real estate. This plan is discussed in some detail later in this report.

GTU has seen significant changes in its leadership in recent years. In February 2020, the board of trustees appointed the then dean and vice president of academic affairs to be the president of GTU. In July 2022, according to GGU, a search process resulted in the president's appointment of a faculty member from a GTU member school as dean and vice president for academic affairs. The remainder of the executive leadership team members (the chief strategy officer and vice president for institutional advancement, CFO, director of library services, and COO) have come into their positions since 2018.

Description of Team's Review Process

The team received the GTU institutional report in January 2023 and held an organizational conference call March 2023 to prepare for the offsite review on April 4-5, 2023. Over the course of the offsite review, the team identified the specific lines of inquiry that would be used during the accreditation visit to GTU. After a videoconference meeting with officials from GTU, the team drafted the lines of inquiry report. The team reviewed additional information provided by GTU following the lines of inquiry report in preparation for the pre-site visit conference call in September 2023. Final discussion regarding the lines of inquiry and logistics of the onsite visit

took place during the pre-visit conference call.

The team convened for the onsite visit on Tuesday evening, October 3rd and conducted its work over the next three days according to the schedule that had been developed. Over the course of the visit, the team met with the GTU board of trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, and students in individual and group meetings. In addition, the team reviewed comments submitted by GTU stakeholders to the confidential email account.

Over the course of the visit, the team developed a list of commendations and recommendations which it shared with the GTU community at the team exit interview on October 6. Within a week of the visit, each team member submitted their written portions of the team report for compilation and editing. An initial draft was distributed to team members for revisions, resulting in a penultimate version. This was sent to the institution for corrections of fact before finalizing the report.

Institution's Reaccreditation Report: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence

GTU's academic dean and the accreditation liaison officer co-chaired the university's reaccreditation steering committee and were joined by a student, trustee, staff member, and mid-way through, a faculty member. Students, faculty, staff and the board of trustees were provided with drafts of the report and opportunities to discuss and provide feedback.

While the team found the institutional report to be honest, the team found the body of the report difficult to follow. It is not clear when the focus was on GTU alone, as an independent institution, versus the GTU consortium. More analytical depth and self-reflection could have enhanced the report. The extensive appendices lacked interpretive analysis. This seems to echo the team's own observations about the uncertainty in GTU's self- identify and organizational cohesiveness.

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ESSAYS

Component 1: Response to previous Commission actions

The team reviewed the progress of GTU in response to the following Commission

recommendations from its June 2015 letter.

1. Continue to develop and institutionalize a framework and capacity for assessment, consistent with current expectations and best practices, that guides the collection, analysis, interpretation, and use of student learning data necessary for program improvement, quality assurance, and evidence- based decision making. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.6,4.1, 4.4)

2. Strengthen program review by: aligning courses to program learning outcomes; establishing standards of performance for student achievement: including an analysis of student learning that results from annual assessments of student learning outcomes. (CFRs 2.1, 2.3, 2.7)

3. Develop a structural solution to the institution's bimodal governance challenge on a schedule that is compatible with the institution's new strategic framework. (CFR 3.9)

4. Create an operational plan that connects anticipated resource gains associated with the strategic framework with the affordability of the doctoral program for new and continuing students. (CFRs 3.4, 4.6, 4.7)

5. Develop an information technology infrastructure that supports academic offerings, advising, research, scholarship, and assessment, and that prioritizes student services consistent with the institution's educational objectives and student learning outcomes. (CFR 3.5)

6. Design a strategy to diversify the executive leadership team and faculty commensurate with the institution's development of a diverse student body, faith traditions, and commitment to interreligious and multicultural education. (CFR 1.4)

The team found that GTU has made significant progress addressing the Commission's

recommendations regarding assessment, program review, governance and diversity. However,

GTU was not able to make much progress on the remaining recommendations concerning

planning and prioritization of student services. GTU's progress towards each of the above

recommendations is discussed in the remainder of this report.

Component 2: Compliance with WSCUC Standards and Federal Requirements

As required by WSCUC and articulated in the 2013 WSCUC Handbook of Accreditation (Revised 2021), GTU submitted the Compliance with WSCUC Standards and Federal Requirements Worksheet. In the following sections, GTU's compliance with the standards is analyzed and summarized, based on evidence provided in the institutional report and information gathered during the Accreditation Visit.

Standard 1 – Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Practices

Institutional Purposes (CFRs 1.1-1.2)

The Graduate Theological Union has a formally approved statement of purposes and a published mission statement (CFR 1.1). As stated in its current catalog,

> Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, brings together scholars of the world's diverse religions and wisdom traditions to advance new knowledge, seek fresh insight, and collaborate on solutions. GTU carries out its work by: Educating scholars for vocations devoted to study and service; Equipping leaders for a world of diverse religions and cultures; Teaching patterns of faith that encourage justice and care of the planet; Serving as an educational and theological resource for local communities, the nation, and the world.

While this is the published mission, it is not clear to the team that this truly represents GTU's current mission and purpose as a separate institution given its intention and need to move towards increasing its independence from the consortium. (CFR 1.1) The published mission does not appear to drive planning and decision-making. Indeed, GTU's purpose is stated differently in its strategic plan as "Graduate Theological Union cultivates inter-religious understanding and

courageous partnerships to foster spiritually grounded action in the creation of a just and loving world."

During the campus visit, it was evident that both GTU staff and faculty often struggled to define "Who is GTU?" This became a recurring theme. It is clear that both the team and GTU recognize the importance of establishing a strong institutional identity. Therefore, the team recommends that GTU undertake, with urgency, a comprehensive self-study to address the questions the team heard throughout the visit: What is GTU to be at this time? What is its role as a member institution in the GTU consortium? What is its role as the hub of the GTU Consortium? (CFR 1.1)

The focus of the GTU degrees is to prepare students for rigorous academic study and research within a context of interreligious engagement. GTU publishes educational objectives at both the course and program levels. The current assessment processes evaluate both programs and courses to ensure they meet objectives. GTU is in the process of refining these practices to better align them with academic goals. (CFR 1.2)

Integrity and Transparency (CFRs 1.3-1.7)

GTU's academic freedom policy is stated in the institutional handbook and faculty handbooks. It is also set as policy in the board of trustees' by-laws as a core responsibility. The policy guarantees the right to academic freedom in research, publication, and in the classroom, as well as speech engaged in as a private citizen. (CFR. 1.3)

GTU has a deep commitment to diversity including the success and retention of students, faculty, and staff. The DEI policy is published on the website and in the GTU catalog. A DEI plan was approved by the board of trustees in April 2021 and included recommendations to ensure equitable access to support services and resources. GTU created a committee on diversity,

equity, and inclusion comprised of trustees, faculty, alumni/ae, center representatives, and presidents of the member schools. (CFR 1.4)

In the 2022 academic year, diversity within the student body by degree program was reported as follows: Asian/Pacific Islander MA 31%/PhD 10%, Black MA 0%/PhD 7%, Hispanic MA 0%/PhD 0%, Native American/Alaskan Native MA 0%/PhD 0%, White MA 31%/PhD 30%, Unknown MA 31%/PhD 15%.

Since the last reaccreditation visit, the board has been successful in changing its membership to ensure that there is a 51% majority of independent trustees so that all decisions are free of conflict of interest. (CFR 1.5)

GTU has published on its website data and policies of public interest to current and potential students. There are published and readily available policies on student grievances, complaints, and refunds. GTU clearly defines the different types of academic credit, as well as the meaning of credit awarded on the transcript. The institution also demonstrates that academic programs can be completed in a timely fashion and that all students are treated fairly and equitably through their established policies. All GTU policies can be found in the catalog and the respective degree handbooks. (CFR 1.6)

GTU has an evaluation process to annually review and maintain policies, procedures, and business practices. An institutional goal for 2023 is to consolidate policies and procedures for student complaints into one portal on the website with a single staff member designated to review complaints and direct the student to resources toward resolving the issue of concern. GTU has identified additional areas needing improvement, including determining how often to administer the student satisfaction survey and updating the faculty handbooks. (CFR 1.7)

The team observed that GTU has been open and honest in its many interactions with WSCUC. (CFR 1.8)

Conclusion

The team's finding, subject to Commission review, is that GTU has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 1. Final determination of compliance with the Standards rests with the Commission.

Standard 2. Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

The institution provides curricular and co-curricular programs along with support services to facilitate teaching, learning and research, and student success. Although these core functions are offered, the team identified challenges due to fiscal limitations related to equally serving both MA and PhD students and appropriately resourcing these functions.

Teaching and Learning (CFRs 2.1-2.7)

The team found that the PhD and MA programs offered by GTU are appropriate in content, standards, and rigor. (CFR 2.1) GTU defines the entry requirements and levels of student achievement (e.g., coursework, capstones, comprehensive exams, and/or dissertation) necessary for degree completion and has sufficient and qualified faculty with terminal degrees who teach across the institution. (CFR 2.2) The MA program requires that students complete a capstone project while the PhD program requires students to demonstrate competency in two foreign languages, successfully pass comprehensive exams, and defend a dissertation. (CFR 2.2b)

GTU faculty has oversight of the curriculum, standards of performance, and assessment of student learning. The faculty council, composed of the core doctoral faculty consisting of both GTU employed faculty and consortium member faculty, has purview over the PhD program. A

group consisting of the academic deans from the consortium schools as well as the GTU dean oversees the common MA program. (CFR 2.3) Evidence of student learning and program review activities are further described in Component 4 of this report. (CFRs 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7)

Scholarship and Creative Activity (CFRs 2.8, 2.9)

GTU publishes policies on faculty scholarship and creative activity in the faculty handbooks. Faculty are given support related to assessment, syllabi review, conference attendance, and have opportunities to present at colloquia. The institution also offers a fellowship for doctoral students to engage in teaching and research with faculty mentors.

Recent budget limitations have led to an overall decline in resources related to research and scholarship. While GTU previously offered a faculty fund to support research, this fund is currently on hiatus. Faculty independently pursue external grants to advance their scholarship and research, but the team heard in its meetings that faculty have received uneven support from the institution to support these efforts. Faculty cited a desire to receive greater support to help identify and secure funds from alternative sources in the absence of institutional funding. (CFRs 2.8, 2.9) The team urges the institution to more clearly demonstrate how it values scholarship and the promotion of creative activity by increasing and embedding appropriate support, both administrative and financial, for faculty.

Student Learning and Success (CFRs 2.10-2.14)

GTU publishes graduation rates and average time to degree for both the MA and PhD. Half of GTU's MA students are part- time; nearly all PhD students are full-time. Published data indicates that 58% of MA students graduate within four years and 41% of PhD students graduate within seven years. The team found that data and regular reporting of student success metrics are not frequently disaggregated by race, gender, or other demographic categories beyond an annual

report produced by institutional research. Student and alumni satisfaction surveys are regularly administered to both MA and PhD students, although GTU has not conducted a campus climate survey. The team did not find evidence that GTU regularly analyzes disaggregated data to improve student achievement and encourages the institution to undertake disaggregated analyses. (CFR 2.10)

Since its last reaffirmation review in 2015, staffing to support student services has decreased, resulting in a decrease in overall student support. Student support and programs, such as clubs, professional development, and programming, are primarily geared toward PhD students. Similar opportunities are absent or only recently emerging for MA and online students. GTU does not offer regular career counseling and formal writing support/tutoring is primarily geared toward international students. (CFRs 2.11, 2.13) GTU did recently contract with a new telehealth provider to increase access to mental health services.

While a full analysis of student support services is provided in Component 5, the team strongly encourages GTU to resolve the lack of support for MA students and consider how it can address the sufficiency of staffing and resources necessary to support robust co-curricular and out-of-classroom learning experiences.

Advising at the institution is primarily the responsibility of faculty. All MA and PhD students are assigned a faculty advisor upon admission. In response to students reporting uneven advising experiences related to their advisor's guidance, GTU increased professional development for faculty advising and emphasized the importance of establishing a close advisor-to-student relationship at orientation. GTU is currently considering restructuring the advising process to include deans and staff to better support the administrative aspects of each student's

experience, but these changes were still being evaluated and not yet implemented at the time of the visit.

Conclusion

The team's finding, subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 2. Final determination of compliance with the Standards rests with the Commission.

Standard 3:   Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

Faculty and Staff (CFRs 3.1-3.3)

GTU has a sufficient number of faculty to support its educational objectives. The institution's 14 faculty employed by GTU is enhanced by faculty from GTU consortium schools. A 48-member core doctoral faculty supports the doctoral program and is comprised of faculty from GTU and its consortium partners. The team was impressed by the quality and dedication of consortia faculty who take on leadership roles at GTU and their home institutions. This consortial arrangement enhances the quality of the GTU PhD and MA programs by providing a more diverse and qualified faculty to its students in a cost-efficient fashion. (CFR 3.1)

The team heard conflicting accounts regarding the sufficiency of staffing. GTU has 48 administrative employees whose position descriptions are viewed by some in the institution as out-of-date because they were created when the positions were designed to support the consortium. Notably, the team found there is a general sense of ambiguity among staff in terms of their roles with respect to the direction of GTU. (CFR 3.1)

The team encourages GTU to rethink staffing and systems to better reflect current needs of GTU. Concern about insufficient staffing was expressed in the areas of academic

administration and library services. (CFR 3.1) Notably, staffing reductions in library services led to a recent reduction in library hours, limiting student access to library services and study areas to weekdays only, with the library closing at 6:00 pm and remaining closed on weekends. (CFR 3.5) This is, in part, caused by the fact that 75% of library operations are funded by consortium members who are pressuring GTU to keep their budgets flat year-over-year, while at the same time costs for electronic library resources are significantly increasing.

GTU faculty and staff expressed a remarkably strong commitment to the institution. They clearly believe in GTU, care deeply for each other as colleagues, and provide good support to GTU students. (CFR 3.1)

GTU remains committed to faculty development and evaluation although financial pressures have led to reductions in this area. GTU deploys solid student assessment processes to ensure learning outcomes are being met. (CFRs 3.2, 3.3)

Fiscal, Physical and Information Resources (CFRs 3.4, 3.5)

GTU has an operating and financial model that reflects the reality of its historic consortium structure. The institution is highly dependent on consortium member revenue to support its operations and has needed to make excessive endowment draws to fund operations. Without the excessive endowment draws, GTU would have run a significant operational deficit for the last three years. Total revenues declined from $9.6M in FY2020-21 to $8.0M in FY2022-23. Enrollment at GTU has declined over this period, and consortium members have signaled their own financial challenges by requesting that GTU keep its consortium membership costs flat for the foreseeable future.

GTU 2.0, the GTU strategic plan, was developed with an eye toward improving the institution's finances, but financial sustainability remains a challenge for the institution. (CFR 3.4) See Component 7 of this report for a more detailed discussion of GTU's financial situation.

Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes (CFRs 3.6-3.10)

In terms of decision-making, the team experienced several disconnects. Of significant concern is the team's observation that the expertise of the leadership team is not coordinated in such a way as to address the institution's ongoing financial challenges. (CFRs 3.6, 3.8)

In addition, there appears to be a disconnect between faculty and staff and the board and executive leadership team. The board and executive leadership team generally expressed confidence in the strategic direction of GTU. However, from a faculty and staff perspective, the team heard expressions of concern about the GTU strategic plan (GTU 2.0), and, in many cases, a confusion about the plan and its specifics. Particular concern was expressed regarding the significant amount of funding going to the GTUx initiative (approximately $450,000 per year) and the lack of genuine engagement with faculty on this key initiative (CFRs 3.7, 3.10). This is discussed in greater detail in Standard 4 of this report.

It was clear to the team that the faculty and dean make decisions about the academic degree programs. (CFR 3.10) However, outside of the degree programs, it is not clear to the team that there is clarity regarding who decides what and who prioritizes the funding of resources to sustain capacity and educational effectiveness. (CFR 3.7)

The team commends GTU for restructuring its board of trustees to ensure its independence and for revising agreements across consortium members (CFR 3.9). The GTU has a board that believes in the mission and purpose of the institution and expresses confidence in its president and senior administration. However, the board of trustees demonstrated only minimal awareness of the financial specifics and condition of GTU. Further, the team saw no evidence of metrics and processes the board uses to evaluate the financial health and vitality of GTU, and to hold the administration accountable for results. (CR 3.9)

While the board annually evaluates leadership, it appears to the team that the evaluative process is based more on a set of relational attributes with no criteria related to performance against the strategic plan or identified metrics. The source of information about performance appears to be discussions with the chief executive officer. The team recommends that the board of trustees independently develop clear and measurable criteria for evaluating the performance of the chief executive officer. (CFR 3.9)

Conclusion

While certain CFRs raise areas of concern, the team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to determine compliance with Standard 3. Final determination of compliance with the Standards rests with the Commission.

Standard 4: Creating An Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

Quality Assurance Processes (CFRs 4.1, 4.2)

GTU has an approval process for changes in the curriculum, with a faculty committee responsible for overseeing and assessing the doctorate degree and another group consisting of the consortium deans overseeing the common MA. (CFR 4.1) Program reviews and assessment of student learning occur every five years and are more fully described in Component 4 of this report. The team was not able to find evidence that there is a clear process for assessing the effectiveness of co-curricular resources, although there is a plan for accomplishing this in the future. (CFR 4.1) Although GTU has not performed an organized and comprehensive assessment of student advising, the team is encouraged that GTU is aware of the need to commit to continuous improvement of advising and has identified several potential means to do so.

The institutional research function is fulfilled by the consortial registrar and is limited to preparing reports for IPEDS, ATS, and the cross-registration report. Although the GTU report states that the registrar "delivers data-driven reports on a regular basis and upon request to the Dean's Office, President's Office, Business Office, and others within the school and consortium," apparently the registrar is not asked for additional data beyond the standard reports. The IR office was not involved in providing any data to support the strategic planning for GTU 2.0. It is clear to the team, from its discussions, that the IR office's work is considered separate from any decision-making. Other than the use of data derived from the faculty's program assessment work, the team was not able to find evidnce that GTU's planning assumptions and goals were data driven. Although GTU set specific targets in its planning documents, the team could not find evidence that GTU effectively evalutes performance measures to identify underlying issues and establish the most effective strategy going forward to achieve its goals. (CFR 4.2)

Institutional Learning and Improvement (CFRs 4.3-4.7)

In 2016, GTU completely revamped its program assessment process. There is now a full-time associate dean for teaching, learning, and assessment. Faculty teams conduct annual assessment reviews of each required core course in both the MA and PhD programs. GTU faculty revised all program learning outcomes and developed curriculum maps. Student performance is now reviewed using faculty-created rubrics. As a result of this assessment work, GTU faculty changed the PhD residency requirement and amended the curriculum, improving student retention and time to completion. (CFRs 4.3, 4.5)

Analysis of student feedback has resulted in a change in online class teaching to enhance student engagement and provide a more well-rounded learning experience for the students. Well-

attended workshops are regularly offered to faculty on a variety of topics designed to enhance teaching. (CFR 4.4)

The team encourages GTU to follow through on its findings, articulated in its institutional report, that it should increase the amount of student and alumni opportunities for feedback through surveys.

As indicated earlier in this report, the board of trustees formally adopted a five-year strategic plan referred to as GTU 2.0. Unfortunately, the plan has not served GTU well in its efforts to galvanize the university community towards becoming financially healthy and independent. The team attributes this to a non-collaborative process for creating the plan and the substance of the plan itself.

The team was not able to determine the specifics around the creation of the plan but heard from faculty and staff a strong sense that the plan was created in a top-down fashion with little input sought from those outside executive leadership. Indeed, the institutional report acknowledged there was concern about limited buy-in from the faculty and staff. (CFR 4.6)

The plan is documented as a power point presentation and offers a broad outline of GTU's future goals. It has an aspirational tone and resembles promotional material rather than a detailed action plan. While the power point presentation is viewed by leadership as the institution's key plan, there are no specific operating or budget plans to track progress towards the plan's goals. It is unclear to the team who is monitoring the plan, how progress toward plan implementation is being evaluated, and the implications should the expectations for GTU 2.0 not be fully met. The team requested a comprehensive document outlining key success indicators, benchmarks, and timelines but was told none exists. Available documents suggest unit-specific

plans without clear metrics. Despite inquiries, the team could not locate any institution-wide documents to gauge progress toward goals. (CFRs 4.6, 4.7)

 As described in team meetings, the key components of the plan consist of increased enrollments, increased fundraising, a new source of revenue through a non-credit program (GTUx) and monetization of GTU owned real estate. The most significant success for GTU to-date, is GTU's ability to sunstantially increase its rental income through refurbishing some of its space.

The purpose of GTUx and its connection to GTU's mission is unclear to most of those with whom the team spoke. From discussions, the team learned that GTUx is led by a special team reporting to the chief strategy office and vice president for institutional advancement. The GTUx team is developing a web-based set of non-credit offerings of interest to new communities of learners. The stated goal of GTUx is to produce new revenue to help offset the school's deficit and call world-wide attention to GTU. The GTUx program has not yet generated the revenue initially projected. Some faculty have been involved; however, meetings with faculty indicate that overall, most faculty members feel excluded from these efforts. There is also a general sense that GTU would be better served if the investments made towards this non-credit venture were put towards efforts to add new degree programs and/or increasing enrollment and retention in the current degree programs.

GTU has not achieved the fundraising and enrollment goals set forth in the GTU 2.0 plan, but the goals are overly ambitious and not supported by available data. For example, the plan indicates that by 2026, over $37 million dollars will be raised in new gifts by 2026. The October 2023 GTU "update on progress of GTU 2.0" forecasts $250,000 in fundraising for 2023

increasing each year up to $540,000 in 2027. Despite the plan's stated fundraising goal, the current year's budget only anticipates $500,000 in fundraising. (CFRs 4.6, 4.7)

The team recommends that GTU evaluate and enhance leadership communication with faculty and staff concerning decision-making processes, resource allocation, and the institution's current financial challenges. (CFRs 3.7, 4.6)

Conclusion

While certain CFRs raise areas of concern, the team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to determine compliance with Standard 4. Final determination of compliance with the Standards rests with the Commission.

Component 3 – Degree Programs: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees
Meaning of the Degrees

It is evident from the materials submitted for reaccreditation, that GTU continues to value and chooses to exist in a space that embodies a global microcosm of religious diversity known as "Holy Hill." It is filled with potential relationships waiting to be explored. Looking around, a student finds the faces and diverse belief systems of the world. GTU is not immune from the inertia of homogeneity, but it stands to interrupt it. It is a place where one can engage intellectually and contribute to the embodiment of diverse knowledge.

 GTU is impacted by the contemporary stresses on theological education. The member schools struggle with enrollment and four have embedded in other institutions. Two have moved altogether. This stark context underscores both the significance and burden of GTU's organizational concept of consortium as it relates to the meaning, quality, and integrity of its academic programs.

GTU defines the meaning of its degrees as growing in knowledge. The quality of its degrees comes from the excellence of working with a diversity of others to come to common ground on solutions. Integrity and coherence of its degrees is the weaving together of the different aspects of a student's learning experiences into a whole. The environment of learning via the consortium is seen as reinforcing how one can grow in self-knowledge amid diversity and change. The larger environment is its own laboratory of the embodiment of engaging difficult issues across diverse religious traditions.

As stated in the catalog, graduating from the GTU prepares students for a diversity of occupations and vocations:

- As thinkers who can identify central issues, interpret them in historical perspective, and understand their practical implications.

- As scholars and writers who study religious traditions and the lives of religious communities.

- As teachers who are conversant with the disciplines of religious and theological studies and are prepared to bring religious and theological issues to life with and for their students.

- As constructive critics and faithful reformers of living religious traditions and of society who can provide fresh voices and insightful perspectives to revitalize a sacred heritage and recover neglected opportunities with their traditions.

- As leaders of genuine dialogue among communities of faith, shaping religious language for the emerging world.

- As specialists on justice issues and organizers prepared to propose fresh approaches to social and moral problems.

As part of a curricular revision implemented in 2016, new program level outcomes were developed for both academic programs. Students who complete the GTU doctoral program will be able to:

- Formulate a research project in terms of the standards of a discipline, but sufficiently clear and well expressed to be comprehensible to scholars in other fields;

- Produce scholarship that is innovative, intellectually and methodologically rigorous, requiring both broad and deep grasp of a field, linguistic skills, sound research methods, and analytical capabilities;

- Incorporate into one's work the critical challenges of one or more religious and scholarly traditions beyond one's own;

- Engage critically with at least one discipline of the research university outside theological and religious studies; and,

- Communicate and interpret the subject matter of their discipline both orally and in written form, with appropriate sensitivity to academic, religious, and cultural contexts.

Students who complete the MA program will be able to:

- Demonstrate focused knowledge in the field of study represented by a chosen concentration;

- Demonstrate general knowledge of several different approaches to theological and religious studies;

- Engage in respectful dialogue with practitioners of another religious tradition; and,

- Produce research projects, each with a clearly formulated capstone statement that is supported by appropriate evidence from primary and secondary sources communicated in an effective scholarly presentation.

Quality and Integrity of Degrees

There are four shared departments for the MA and PhD: Sacred Texts and their Interpretation; Historical and Cultural Studies in Religion; Theology and Ethics; and Religion and Practice. A revision of both the PhD and MA handbooks is underway. While the team observed that the handbook content appears to be accurate, there is a lack of clarity that could be remedied with some careful reorganization.

Cross registration with UC Berkeley enhances students' ability to pursue interdisciplinary research. Nearly all doctoral students and many MA students take advantage of the cross-registration agreement with UC Berkeley, and most doctoral students have university faculty who serve on their comprehensive exam and dissertation committees.

GTU students assist with the production of four leading scholarly journals (Teaching Theology and Religion, Theology and Science, The Journal of Dharma Studies, and Anglican Theological Review) and collaborate with GTU faculty on interdisciplinary ventures such as the Berkeley Art and Interreligious Pilgrimage Project, the Center for Theology and the Natural Science's research project on the ethical implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and GTUx offerings on topics such as "Psychedelics and Religion."

Component 4: Educational Quality: Student learning, core competencies, and standards of performance at graduation

GTU's learning outcomes are aligned with the ATS standards for graduate programs. The institution has structures and processes in place to monitor quality assurance and the institution is engaged in continuous improvement activities regarding educational quality.

Learning Outcomes

Since its last reaffirmation, the institution revised its program learning outcomes, revamped both its assessment process and rubrics, and implemented the TaskStream cloud

platform to streamline and catalog its assessment activities. Learning outcomes are developed and approved by the core doctoral faculty for the PhD program and by the council of deans, including faculty, for the MA program. Institutional learning outcomes foster active engagement with literature and promote the importance of scholarship and practice at both degree levels and they are included in academic handbooks, policies, curricula, and syllabi. (CFR 2.2b, 2.3, 2.4)

GTU faculty engage in learning outcome assessment and attend annual meetings to review these learning outcomes. The institution has adopted universal design for learning, featuring the "Plus One" approach. This method allows faculty to offer an additional option for students to complete an activity, thereby providing multiple avenues for demonstrating mastery of a specific learning outcome.

MA learning outcomes are assessed using key milestone submissions including an interreligious engagement course artifact, an advanced (i.e., 4000 level or above) course artifact, a thesis/capstone proposal, and a final thesis/capstone. PhD learning outcomes are assessed through milestones represented by two research-ready papers, comprehensive exams, dissertation proposal, the dissertation itself, a statement of teaching philosophy, an artifact related to teaching competency, and a conference paper/publication. Students submit their artifacts through the TaskStream platform where their work is assessed by faculty. (CFR 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 4.3)

Standards of Performance

Faculty have defined standards of performance for both MA and PhD learning outcomes by identifying a benchmark of 80% who meet or exceed expectations on all rubric criteria. An associate dean for teaching, learning, and assessment oversees the institution's quality assurance processes. The associate dean works closely with the faculty in their assessment and continuous improvement activities by providing an annual report related to the standards of performance for

all students who submitted artifacts related to their milestones in the previous academic year. Cumulative assessment findings are reviewed and analyzed during the process of program review, which is on a five-year cycle. Faculty share their assessment findings and discuss continuous improvement within both the representative core doctoral faculty and the council of deans. (CFR 2.4, 2.5, 2.6) Institutional assessment processes and academic program reviews are further discussed in Component 6.

A previous five-year program review in 2020 indicated that faculty were concerned with the rigor of the MA program by citing nearly 100% of MA students satisfy the assessment rubrics. The institution attributed this trend to the issue of assessment "inflation" that had become problematic due to faculty not having clear guidelines of how to calibrate to rubric requirements. These concerns were addressed by more specifically detailing each rubric criterion and offering regular training with faculty to clarify how to evaluate artifacts more objectively. Faculty responded positively to this clarification by correcting their evaluation inflation and they continue to regularly monitor the curriculum and their assessment process to ensure appropriate rigor. (CFR 2.4, 2.6)

Disaggregation of Standards of Performance

While the team found the institution was fully engaged in ensuring educational quality through its learning outcomes assessment process, there was limited evidence to suggest that data regarding standards of performance were regularly disaggregated other than by degree program (i.e., MA vs. PhD). The institution acknowledges that while TaskStream collects and stores demographic data (gender, race/ethnicity, citizenship status) upon student enrollment, enabling disaggregation of outcomes, its use has been limited because of small sample sizes. Institutional research also acknowledged that embedding demographic information to TaskStream requires an

inefficient manual process due to the decentralized nature of the institution's IT infrastructure, which does not enable platforms to seamlessly communicate with one another. While team meetings identified anecdotal evidence that suggested international students may have increased difficulty in meeting the standards of performance, the team was not able to identify direct evidence to corroborate this notion or other potential equity gaps related to learning and performance.

The team commends the GTU faculty on its impressive revision of the learning outcomes and the development of a formal assessment process. The team also encourages GTU to consider how it can incorporate demographic data related to race/ethnicity, gender, etc. and disaggregate outcomes to identify and address what, if any, equity gaps exist regarding student learning. (CFR 2.10)

Component 5: Student Success: Student learning, retention, and graduation

The following discussion considers this component in terms of student services as well as the institutional evidence regarding the MA and PhD programs.

Student Services

The institutional report detailed the roles of three different members of the Student Affairs Office:

- the associate dean of students who helps students successfully complete their program milestones, addresses student complaints, disability resources, harassment issues, requests for leaves of absence, and monitors satisfactory academic progress;
- the director of student life, international students, and scholars who processes visa applications and connects students with possible housing opportunities; and

- the academic programs coordinator who assists in processing paperwork, scheduling exams, and recording milestones.

However, by the time of the visit, these three roles had been replaced by the interim senior director for student success, with redistribution of some of these tasks to other staff.

The institutional report noted that students have reported uneven experiences with advising, and that the associate dean of students (now no longer at GTU) would provide administrative guidance to help compensate for the variability of consortial faculty advisors' understanding of GTU programs. During the site visit, the dean and vice president of academic affairs stated that responsibility for providing this administrative guidance would now be distributed among a wider number of staff. However, this plan has not yet been operationalized. Also, given the range of tasks represented by the three roles described above, the team remains concerned that this redistribution of roles may not be enough to adequately support student success. (CFRs 2.12, 2.13)

The institutional report also identifies the important role that GTU's professional development program provides to its students through a series of workshops. It notes that there has been greater interest and engagement with these sessions since the Pandemic, which saw participation increase from 2-6 students per session to 8-10 students in online sessions – with four times that many students viewing the recordings once they are posted. GTU also distributes a monthly newsletter with relevant job opportunities and continues to support the Newhall Fellowship Program, which offers funding for students to develop, collaborate, and/or assist in teaching a course with a faculty member. Another important service is GTU's partnership with an external agency that provides dossier services for PhD students to assist them with securing employment.

The interim senior director for student success demonstrated a strong commitment to evidence-based practice during the visit. This offers a positive indication that there may be a focus on improving those areas most in need. In support of this, the students that attended the interview with the team offered reassurances that at the time of the visit they were not experiencing significant deficits in student services and found the staff to be consistently friendly and supportive. However, staff across the institution noted that their increased workloads, because of restructuring, is a significant pain point for them despite their strong commitment to the vision and mission of the institution. (CFR 3.1)

The high cost of housing is another area of critical concern for the entire GTU community, expressed most urgently by students. The school is using various strategies to manage this problem, including the faculty reducing the residency requirement for PhD students to provide a new option for students to lower the cost of living in Berkeley. Yet, students reported that the available solutions are both inadequate and shrinking, since some consortial institutions that previously made their housing available to GTU students are discontinuing that service to meet their own financial challenges. One student reported being on the verge of homelessness in the previous term and staff members alleged some students are already sleeping in their vehicles. The reported 50% increase in funds raised for scholarships for both programs between FY21 and FY22 is promising, but further strategic reflection and problem-solving may be needed to address this potent threat to enrollment, retention, and ultimately student learning. (CFR 2.10)

The team recommends that GTU implement appropriate diagnostic tools to assess the campus environment and use the results to enhance academic and co-curricular experiences, as well as foster unity within both physical and virtual campus communities for faculty, staff, and students. (CFR 4.3)

MA Program

In fall 2022, the MA program enrolled 26 students (62% female, 31% male, and 7% non-binary). Various features of the program contribute to maintaining its relatively low mean completion time, which averaged 2.5 years over the last three academic years. First, tuition is charged differently after the first two years of enrollment, providing a financial incentive to complete the program within that window. Another contributing factor is the decision of the 2019 council of deans to allow an alternative capstone. Previously, all students were required to complete a 6-unit, 75-90-page thesis. However, the data on the frequency with which students tended to struggle with this assignment encouraged a new option. Now, students have the option of taking an additional course and writing a 3-unit, 30-40-page paper instead of the thesis. (CFR 4.1)

MA graduation rates disaggregated by race/ethnicity indicate that international students on visas are the most likely to graduate within 4 years (70%), followed by non-white US students (67%), white US students (48%), and those domestic students that did not report race (43%). Inquiring about the reasons behind these differences may provide important further insights about program retention. (CFR 2.10) GTU also tracks the MA students after graduation, and reports that the most common placements are in pursuing additional education (26%), ministry or chaplaincy (23%), and business (16%). Further investigation into the circumstances resulting in students entering business might provide insight on the benefits of the program.

The GTU report acknowledges that the 2020 MA program review indicated that students struggle to feel a sense of community while enrolled. As a result, GTU recently began inviting MA students to attend PhD colloquia events, which they hope will provide more opportunities for collegial connection and development. (CFR 2.10)

PhD Program

  In contrast to the MA program in which over half identify as female, the PhD program had 112 total students in Fall 2022: Of these, 37% identify as female, 57% identify as male, and 6% as non-binary. This data is also disaggregated by race in GTU's report. PhD enrollment data by race are also compared with state, national, and enrollment in all other PhD/ThD students in ATS schools. By comparing these groupings, GTU was able to observe that while enrollment of Hispanic students is noticeably inconsistent with state and national population ratios, it is reasonably consistent with Hispanic student enrollment in all ATS-accredited PhD and ThM programs.

  The institutional report favorably compares GTU's PhD three-year average completion rate of 6.2 years with peer schools. This includes all doctoral degrees in the Arts and Humanities as reported in the Survey of Earned Doctorates, as well as average completion rates at Claremont School of Theology, Harvard Divinity School, and Drew University Theological School. The report also notes that this mean time to degree at GTU represents a decrease since 2018-19, when it was 7.6 years.

  When considering this data disaggregated according to race and ethnicity, GTU observes that 80% of Hispanic/Latinx students in the 2013-2015 cohorts graduated within 7 years, and 56% of Hispanic/Latinx students from the 2010-2012 cohorts graduated within 10 years. These rates are marginally higher than some groups and significantly higher than others within the same cohorts. GTU theorizes that their relatively higher rates of completion for Hispanic/Latinx students can likely be attributed to their membership in the Hispanic Theological Initiative Consortium.

GTU acknowledges that while their tuition is comparable to other PhD programs, the continuation fees that students are charged once they have completed their seminars are "much higher," and that student aid is reduced "drastically" after the first two years. GTU believes that this, along with the housing factors noted earlier, tend to slow student completion rates while also resulting in high student debt burdens by the time students finish. The institution notes that 15 of the 24 2022 PhD graduates accrued around $100,000 of debt during their programs, which was in addition to the school debt they brought from previous degrees averaging nearly $60,000. GTU notes that these kinds of numbers motivated the development of a financial aid strategic plan, which is designed to increase scholarship giving.

Regarding job placement, the top three categories reported by graduates ---"full-time teaching," "part-time or adjunct teaching," and "ministry/chaplaincy" ---align with with the goals of the degree programs. However, given the dwindling number of faculty positions in the job market, the institution is prudently considering vocational preparation for a wider range of post-PhD careers.

Component 6: Quality Assurance and Improvement: Program review, assessment, use of data and evidence

The team observed that GTU engages in regular and consistent assessment and review of its programs both in its annual assessment reports and the periodic program reviews that take place every five years.

Annual Assessment Reports

The associate dean of teaching, learning and assessment oversees the collection of student learning data through GTU's use of TaskStream. Students submit examples of their work, which faculty assess using shared standardized rubrics. (CFRs 2.4, 2.6) The results of those assessments are compiled into annual reports for each degree and certificate program, serving as a basis for

faculty discussions. The respective student handbooks for each degree clearly explain student responsibilities for submitting work to TaskStream, and the resulting reports demonstrate faculty diligence in completing these reviews.

These reports are clear, simple, and include the curriculum map for each degree along with details about whether student learning reflected the 80% benchmarks set by faculty for each metric. They include both recommendations from faculty discussion and action plans. (CFR 4.1) Each also provides evidence of how decisions are being made, and who is responsible for implementation. (CFR 4.3) These reports are shared differently depending on the program. The PhD assessment report is discussed with the core doctoral faculty. The MA assessment report receives feedback from the MA assessment committee and then is presented to the council of deans. The respective certificate assessment reports are developed in consultation with the certificate chairs, the dean, and the associate dean for teaching, learning, and assessment to determine next steps. (CFR 3.7)

Program Reviews

GTU has completed two formal program reviews in the last four years. The PhD program review was completed in 2019 and the MA program review in 2020. The program reviews were carried out in accordance with GTU's comprehensive "program review self-study report guidelines." Program reviews are scheduled to take place every five years. Documents were developed through collaborative input from GTU administration, faculty, and students. The program reviews assess program quality, financial sustainability, and strategic alignment and planning. Each also includes feedback from external evaluators. (CFRs 2.7, 4.7)

The program reviews are shared slightly differently, depending on the program. The PhD program review is shared directly with the core doctoral faculty for further consideration. The

MA program review is discussed among the council of deans after being reviewed by the MA

assessment committee. (CFRs 2.4, 4.5)

The outcomes of the program reviews encompassed plans for several areas: appointing

new faculty positions, refining faculty training for online instruction, advising on tuition and

fees, easing the residence requirement, enhancing program guidance for students, making

department colloquia accessible to MA students, expanding professional development

opportunities for students, and recommending an institutional role focused on diversity, equity,

and inclusion to the board of trustees. (CFRs 2.4, 2.12-13, 4.1, 4.3-5)

Ad Hoc Assessment Activities

The institutional report highlighted ways that GTU has used the TaskStream assessment

reports and EvaluationKit course evaluation data to improve more focused aspects of each

program. For example, the data generated from these tools have been used to facilitate discussion

within the faculty that resulted in adjustments in each of the PhD doctoral seminars. (CFRs 4.3,

4.4)

Assessment of Program Evaluation Procedures

In its institutional report, GTU credits the implementation of TaskStream for

strengthening assessment of both programs, improving "evaluation rubrics for program

requirements and…a welcome increase in the level of faculty engagement with pedagogy and

course design." These are commendable outcomes of the changes made since 2016 and suggest

that this is an area of institutional strength. (CFR 4.1)

At the same time, while it is true that the registrar has been appointed as the director of

institutional research, the scope of his access to learning and sustainability data is limited due to

the lack of a unified digital architecture or integration across systems. This also means that data

disaggregated by student-related factors that are housed in the student information system (SONIS) such as race/ethnicity, gender, age, or program milestone are easier to provide than data disaggregated on these factors in other systems. For example, being able to disaggregate evidence of student learning by race/ethnicity, nationality, or gender in the TaskStream system may provide better guidance regarding how well different sub-groups of students are learning in their programs. Similarly, it might be helpful to disaggregate student financial information by some of these same demographic factors to enhance equity of scholarship award decisions. (CFR 2.10)

Component 7: Sustainability: Financial viability, preparing for the changing higher education Environment

GTU understands the changing landscape of higher education and the particular challenges facing graduate theological education. GTU has taken steps to address these challenges through its strategic planning work that aims to grow enrollment by adjusting the institution's current academic offerings for improved alignment with student demand, expanding into the online modality for its MA program, and adding certificate programs. In addition, GTU 2.0 features GTUx as an online platform for showcasing GTU scholarship and capabilities, with the assumption this will enhance GTU fundraising efforts and generate subscription revenue for GTU.

From a financial perspective, GTU 2.0 is falling short of expectations. Enrollment trends continue to show an overall decline, and GTUx is currently running at a significant deficit (with fundraising and subscription revenues totaling $240k, against expenditures of $431k in FY2022-23). GTU has been addressing its operating expenses by drawing on certain endowment funds with accumulated earnings, a measure exceeding its 5% target draw rate by 2027. This strategy, sanctioned by the board in line with the GTU 2.0 plan, has led to annual draws as high as 6%-

10%. As of June 30, 2023, it is projected that these funds, already dwindling, will be depleted by the second quarter of fiscal 2027. Many at GTU expressed to the team their concern over the financial challenges facing the institution. Leadership shared with the team that if nothing else changes, by fall 2026, the excess earnings in the funds providing the excess draw will be depleted.

GTU has made some progress to improve its financial position. In the past year, GTU monetized some of its real estate assets by renting space, which is anticipated to generate $1M in additional revenue for FY2023-24. This revenue gain faces significant challenges, primarily due to an anticipated $500K shortfall from a grant whose renewal remains unconfirmed, ompounded by a $300K reduction in consortium fees. GTU leadership expressed the opinion that it must make annual expense reductions of $500k-$1.0M to become financially sustainable. An initial reduction will come from GTU outsourcing its business office, which is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2023. Beyond this, the team heard conflicting views as to the feasibility of cost-cutting, with some mentioning areas like academic administration as a target for streamlining, and others identifying it as an area that is understaffed. And as was mentioned previously, the library has already begun to cut expenses, resulting in curtailed library hours, which is a concern in terms of student support and services.

As previously noted, GTU has an operating and financial model that reflects the reality of its historic consortium structure. The institution is highly dependent on consortium member revenue to support its operations. GTU's audited financial statements indicate that consortium revenue represented 24.6% of GTU revenue in FY2020-21 and 21.6% in FY2021-22. Preliminary FY2022-23 projctions, as indicated in the October 2023 "Update on Progress of GTU 2.0," show consortium revenue at 28.0% of total revenue ($2.238M out of projected

$7.993M). GTU leadership expressed confidence that the current consortium members will remain committed to the consortium through at least 2026-27, though consortium member commitment remains an ongoing concern for the team considering the financial pressures facing each member institution.

From a balance sheet perspective, GTU enjoys a relatively strong financial position, with cash, cash equivalents, and long-term investments totaling $55.4M and total liabilities of $3.3M at the end of FY2021-22. However, GTU is drawing from its endowment at a level that cannot be sustained.

The team recommends that GTU develop a detailed, realistic, multi-year operating and budget plan that annually generates a positive net income, reflects prudent endowment management, and identifies key underlying assumptions. (CFR 3.4)

As discussed earlier, there is no clear institutional-wide framework for aligning GTU strategic priorities with detailed operating and budgeting plans. Further, the team saw no evidence of systems of accountability for identifying and achieving short-, medium-, and long-term goals related to GTU 2.0. Finally, when meeting with the team, the GTU board of trustees showed only modest concern for the pressing financial challenges facing GTU. The team was told that GTU has convened a committee for long-range planning to address the continued challenges facing GTU. The board shared that this committee will begin its work in earnest beginning January 2024 and indicated the process will take at least a year or more to complete.

In its favor, the GTU enjoys a remarkably committed faculty and staff. Unfortunately, many of them expressed being shut out from past strategic planning conversations that might generate ideas for revenue generation and growth as well as identify areas for streamlining and cost-cutting. The team was quite impressed with this level of commitment and passion,

especially against the backdrop of the financial challenges facing GTU. The team encourages GTU to quickly gather its campus community to have an open, honest conversation about its financial reality, and to tap into the creativity and commitment of its people to identify solutions toward the financial sustainability and mission advancement of the institution.

The team recommends GTU move with haste toward addressing its strategic direction and rectifying its financial predicament. In particular, the team recommends that GTU establish a planning framework and tap into the creative thinking, passion, and commitment of its faculty and non-executive staff in identifying new strategies and developing detailed plans and timelines to put GTU on an immediate path toward financial health and sustainability. Such plans should incorporate financial and operating metrics for measuring progress. (CFRs 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 4.6)

In addition, the team recommends that GTU regularly generate management reports to track the advancement of strategic initiatives, operating plans, and associated financial results; integrate key operating and financial metrics from strategic, operating, and financial plans, complete with specific goals for each; and, implement a systematic review and discussion process for these reports to ensure accountability in pursuing vital institutional goals. (CFRs 3.6, 4.6)

Component 9: Reflection and Plans for Improvement

The team encourages GTU in its efforts, as articulated in its report, to pay increased attention to the many improvement projects it identified in its report, including the following:

- Provide space for rebuilding community post pandemic.
- Cultivate relationships within and across administration, alumni, board, faculty, staff, and students through common events, meetings, professional development opportunities, and retreats.

- Successfully implement the strategic plan.

- Simplify academic procedures and provide clear guidance about requirements to help reduce time-to-degree and support student persistence.

- Engage in a thorough review and revision of student handbooks for the MA, PhD, and Certificate programs.

- Improve academic advising.

- Continue to cultivate an assessment mindset throughout the institution.

- Update the Rostered and In-Residence Faculty Handbook.

- Implement the DEI plan to embed the institution's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in all aspects of the GTU's operations.

SECTION III – COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The team commends GTU for:

1. The staff and faculty's deep commitment and respect toward each other and GTU's students.

2. The dedication, loyalty, and creativity exhibited by faculty and staff.

3. The candor, thoughtfulness, and sincerity of those interviewed during the reaffirmation visit.

4. The impressive development of a formal assessment process, which includes the implementation of the TaskStream platform, regular reporting of results, and annual assessment training to enhance teaching and learning.

5. The reduction in time to degree for both the MA and PhD programs through curricular changes informed by student feedback and assessment findings.

6. The significant and meaningful progress towards ensuring the independence of the governing board by revamping the board bylaws and board membership requirements, as well as revising the agreement among consortium members.

The team recommends that GTU:

1. Undertake, with urgency, a comprehensive self-study to address the questions the team heard throughout the visit: What is GTU to be at this time? What is its role as a member institution in the GTU consortium? What is its role as the hub of the GTU Consortium? (CFRs 1.1, 4.7)

2. Establish a planning framework and tap into the creative thinking, passion, and commitment of its faculty and non-executive staff in identifying new strategies and developing detailed plans and timelines to put GTU on an immediate path toward financial health and sustainability. Such plans should incorporate financial and operating metrics for measuring progress. (CFRs 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 4.6)

3. Regularly generate management reports to track the advancement of strategic initiatives, operating plans, and associated financial results. Integrate key operating and financial metrics from strategic, operating, and financial plans, complete with specific goals for each. Implement a systematic review and discussion process for these reports to ensure accountability in pursuing vital institutional goals. (CFRs 3.6, 4.6)

4. Evaluate and enhance leadership communication with faculty and staff concerning decision-making processes, resource allocation, and the institution's current financial challenges. (CFRs 3.7, 4.6)

5. Ensure that the board of trustees develops clear and measurable criteria for evaluating the performance of a chief executive officer. (CFR 3.9)

6. Implement appropriate diagnostic tools to assess the campus environment and use the results to enhance academic and co-curricular experiences, as well as foster unity within both physical and virtual campus communities for faculty, staff, and students. (CFR 4.3)

7. Develop a detailed, realistic, multi-year operating and budget plan that annually generates a positive net income, reflects prudent endowment management, and identifies key underlying assumptions. (CFR 3.4)

APPENDICES

1 - CREDIT HOUR AND PROGRAM LENGTH REVIEW FORM

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate.)
Policy on credit hour	Is this policy easily accessible? X☐ YES ☐ NO
	If so, where is the policy located? https://www.gtu.edu/sites/default/files/users/registrar/Credit_Units_Policy.pdf
	Comments: Easy to get to off of the central web site under policies.
Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour	Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)X ☐ YES ☐ NO Through Program Review and New Course approval process
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? X☐ YES ☐ NO
	Comments:
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? https://gtusonis.jenzabarcloud.com/GENSRsC.cfm X☐ YES ☐ NO
	Comments:
Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses *Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.*	Sample online syllabi:
	How many syllabi were reviewed? 10
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? Both
	What degree level(s)? ☐ AA/AS ☐ BA/BS x☐ MA x☐ Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Theology
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? X☐ YES ☐ NO
	Comments:
Sample syllabi or equivalent for other kinds of courses that do not meet for the prescribed hours (e.g., internships, labs, clinical, independent study, accelerated)	How many syllabi were reviewed?
	What kinds of courses?
	What degree level(s)? ☐ AA/AS ☐ BA/BS ☐ MA ☐ Doctoral
	What discipline(s)?
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.	Comments: N/A
Sample program information (catalog, website, or other program materials)	How many programs were reviewed? 3
	What kinds of programs were reviewed? Doctorate, Masters, Certificates
	What degree level(s)? ☐ AA/AS ☐ BA/BS X☐ MA X ☐ Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Theology
	Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? X☐ YES ☐ NO
	Comments:

Review Completed By: Barbara Karlin
Date: 10/1/23

2 - <u>MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT REVIEW FORM</u>

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices.

Material Reviewed	Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.
**Federal regulations	Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students? https://www.gtu.edu/admissions X❏ YES ❏ NO
	Comments:
Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? https://www.gtu.edu/academics/accreditation-educational-effectiveness X❏ YES ❏ NO
	Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? https://www.gtu.edu/admissions/tuition-financial-aid X❏ YES ❏ NO
	Comments:
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? Catalog, pp. 7 (PhD) and 24 (MA) https://www.gtu.edu/academics/accreditation-educational-effectiveness X ❏ YES ❏ NO
	Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? https://www.gtu.edu/academics/accreditation-educational-effectiveness https://www.gtu.edu/academics/transformative-impact X❏ YES ❏ NO
	Comments:

*§602.16(a)(1)(vii)

**Section 487 (a)(20) of the Higher Education Act (HEA) prohibits Title IV eligible institutions from providing incentive compensation to employees or third party entities for their success in securing student enrollments. Incentive compensation includes commissions, bonus payments, merit salary adjustments, and promotion decisions based solely on success in enrolling students. These regulations do not apply to the recruitment of international students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive Federal financial aid.

Review Completed By: Barbara Karlin 10/1/2023

3 - <u>STUDENT COMPLAINTS REVIEW FORM</u>

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's student complaints policies, procedures, and records.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Policy on student complaints	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? X❑ YES ❑ NO
	If so, is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Is so, where? Academic Grievance Procedures are in _Common MA Program Handbook_ (pp. 45-46) and _Doctoral Program Handbook_ (pp. 57-58). https://www.gtu.edu/student-life/student-complaints
	Comments:
Process(es)/ procedure	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? X❑ YES ❑ NO If so, please describe briefly: Academic Grievance Procedures are in _Common MA Program Handbook_ (pp. 45-46) and _Doctoral Program Handbook_ (pp. 57-58). https://www.gtu.edu/student-life/student-complaints
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? X❑ YES ❑ NO
	Comments:
Records	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? X❑ YES ❑ NO If so, where? Records of student complaints are maintained in the office of the Director of Student Life
	Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? X ❑ YES ❑ NO If so, please describe briefly: Complaints have been very few, but the Director of Student Life regularly reviews the records to see if there are recurrent patterns that need to be brought to the attention of the appropriate department head.
	Comments:

*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)
See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Complaints and Third Party Comment Policy.

Review Completed By: Barbara Karlin
Date: 10/1/23

4 – <u>TRANSFER CREDIT POLICY REVIEW FORM</u>

Under federal regulations*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices accordingly.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Transfer Credit Policy(s)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? X ❑ YES ❑ NO
	If so, is the policy publically available? X❑ YES ❑ NO If so, where? https://www.gtu.edu/sites/default/files/GTU%20Transfer%20of%20Credit%20Policy.pdf
	Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? X❑ YES ❑ NO
	Comments:

*§602.24(e): Transfer of credit policies. The accrediting agency must confirm, as part of its review for renewal of accreditation, that the institution has transfer of credit policies that--

(1) Are publicly disclosed in accordance with 668.43(a)(11); and

(2) Include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Transfer of Credit Policy.

Review Completed By: Barbara Karlin
Date: 10/1/23

<u>Distance Education Review</u>-Team Report Appendix

Institutions must have WSCUC approval to utilize distance education in the delivery of any of its programs in any amount, and are required to seek WSCUC approval for programs where 50% or more of the program can be completed through distance education. The institution's use of distance education in the delivery of its programs is reviewed as part of a comprehensive evaluation of the institution including an Accreditation Visit or Seeking Accreditation Visit.

<u>Distance Education</u> <u>is defined as</u>:

Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed below to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor or instructors and to support **regular and substantive interaction** between the students and the instructor or instructors, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies that may be used to offer distance education include:

- The internet;
- One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband, fiber optic, satellite, or wireless communication devices;
- Audioconference;
- Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in this definition

In keeping with federal expectations, WSCUC requires institutions that utilize distance education in the delivery of programs to demonstrate "Faculty-Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction" and"Academic Engagement" as defined by the federal regulations (see Code of Federal Regulations §600.2).

Regular and Substantive Interaction is engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following:

(i) Providing direct instruction;

(ii) Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;

(iii) Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;

(iv) Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or

(v) Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

An institution ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency -

(i) Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and

(ii) Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

Academic Engagement requires active participation by a student in an instructional activity related to the student's course of study that –

(1) Is defined by the institution in accordance with any applicable requirements of its State or accrediting agency;

(2) Includes, but is not limited to -

(i) Attending a synchronous class, lecture, recitation, or field or laboratory activity, physically or online, where there is an opportunity for interaction between the instructor and students;

(ii) Submitting an academic assignment;

(iii) Taking an assessment or an exam;

(iv) Participating in an interactive tutorial, webinar, or other interactive computer-assisted instruction;

(v) Participating in a study group, group project, or an online discussion that is assigned by the institution; or

(vi) Interacting with an instructor about academic matters

Please complete either Section A for institutions that offer distance education programs approved by WSCUC or are 100% distance education institutions OR Section B for institutions that utilize distance education in the delivery of programs that do not rise to the level of a WSCUC approved distance education program.

Institution: Graduate Theological Union

Type of Visit: Reaffirmation

Name of reviewer/s: Thomas Wolfe and Barbara Karlin

Date/s of review: September, 2023

Section Completed: X A OR __B

A completed copy of this form should be appended to the team report for all comprehensive visits and for other visits as applicable. Teams can use the institutional report to begin their investigation, then, use the visit to confirm claims and further surface possible concerns. Teams are not required to include a narrative about this in the team report but may include recommendations, as appropriate, in the Findings and Recommendations section of the team report.

SECTION A: Institutions with Approved Distance Education Programs

1. Programs and courses reviewed (please list)

   Certificate in Interreligious Studies
   Certificate in Interreligious Chaplaincy (Distance Education)
   MA in Theology & Religious Studies (Distance Education)

2. Background Information (number of programs offered by distance education; degree levels; FTE enrollment in distance education courses/programs; history of offering distance education; percentage growth in distance education offerings and enrollment; platform, formats, and/or delivery method)

   Online interreligious Studies Program:
   -The program launched in Fall 2020
   -5 courses (7.5 credits) offered in 11-months (September-July),
   -All required elements of the course are offered asynchronously through the Moodle LMS, with optional synchronous sessions offered through Zoom.
   -The program enrollment since Fall 2020 ranged from 4-8 students per year.

   Online Interreligious Chaplaincy Program
   -The program launched in Fall 2020
   -2 year program, 24 credits required

-All required elements are offered either synchronously or asynchronously depending on the course and instructor preference.
-The program enrollment since Fall 2020 ranged from 10-30 students per year.

MA in Theology & Religious Studies (Distance Education)
-The program launched in Fall 2023
-2 year program, 48 credits required
-All required elements are offered either synchronously or asynchronously depending on the course and instructor preference.
-The program enrollment numbers will be available in October 2023.

3. Nature of the review (material examined and persons/committees interviewed)

The committee review was conducted by Chair, Thomas Wolfe and Vice Chair Barbara Karlin. They interviewed Diandra C. Erickson, Ph.D., Associate Dean for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment. She described in detail the process of the GTU online courses. The reviewers asked questions about technical support for students and faculty, development of pedagogy, and gathering of student experience feedback. She provided access to Moodle so we could each review three courses and experience DE as GTU provides it.

The chair reviewed three courses:
SPHS-8423-1: SONG OF SONGS IN CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY (Fall 2022). This course is offered in a synchronous format open to MA, MDiv, and PhD students. Student enrollment of 12.

HR-8175-1: CHRISRTIANITY AND INTERRELGIOUS DIMENSIONS (Spring 2023). This is offered as an asynchronous certificate course for the interreligious certificate program. Student enrollment of 10.

PR-2400-1: SOULCARE AND CHAPLAINCY (Fall 2022). This course is offered as an asynconronous certificate course for the Interreligious Chaplaincy Program. Student enrollment of 18.

The Vice Chair reviewed three courses:
PR-8375-1: DEATH THEOLOGIES AND RITUALS IN CHAPLAINCY (Spring 2023). This course met synchronously one day a week and asynchronously for one hour in the discussion forum. Student enrollment of 27.

HRHS-8380-1: BAHA'I HISTORY (Fall 2022). The course had one scheduled 90-minute meeting per week at a time selected by all participants during the first week of class. Student enrollment of 4.

HR-8180-1: ISLAM AND ITS INTERRELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS (Fall 2022). This course is offered in hybrid format, requiring both synchronous and asynchronous participation. Student enrollment of 12.

Observations and Findings

Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	Follow-up Required (identify the issues)
Fit with Mission. How does the institution conceive of distance learning relative to its mission, operations, and administrative structure? How are distance education offerings planned, funded, and operationalized?	The goals of the Certificate in Interreligious Studies (IRC), Certificate in Interreligious Chaplaincy (ICP), and MA in Theology and Religious Studies online programs are guided by the GTU's mission statement, which states that the institution's programs equip leaders for a world of diverse religions and cultures, teach patterns of faith that encourage justice and care of the planet, and serve as an educational and theological resource for local communities, the nation, and the world. The certificate programs build on the GTU's long-established commitment to interreligious scholarship by providing skills to effectively serve persons from diverse religious backgrounds in various situations and life stages. Each certificate program has a designated Director who handles administrative tasks for each program including planning, budget, and operations. The online MA is a distance education version of the residential MA that the GTU has offered since 1968. The online version is part of the GTU's strategic plan to increase enrollment and enable greater access to education at the GTU without the added expense of moving to the Bay Area. Policies governing the MA Program are established by the GTU Council of Deans and Consortial Faculty. The Deans govern the MA Program and ensure that standards are commonly understood and equitably applied to all MA students. Policies requiring review or change are brought to the Deans for consideration and decision. The Associate Dean of Students serves as the MA Program Director who oversees the administration of the program, including maintenance of the program handbook.	No follow-up required.

Connection to the Institution. How are distance education students integrated into the life and culture of the institution?	All DE students are required to participate in orientation sessions before their program starts. In these sessions, they meet the Director of their programs, learn about registration and other logistical tasks, and attend Q and A sessions with staff members in academic affairs. Additionally, DE students are invited to a welcome reception where they have the opportunity to meet students from other programs, along with faculty and staff from various centers and member schools.	No follow-up required.
	Additionally, students outside of DE programs can enroll in courses offered by those programs. This provides DE students with many opportunities to interact with a diverse array of students at the GTU and its member schools.	
	Lastly, DE students are encouraged to attend virtual events offered by the GTU including conferences, lectures, and student gatherings.	

Quality of the DE Infrastructure. Are the learning platform and academic infrastructure of the institution conducive to learning and interaction between faculty and students and among students? Is the technology adequately supported? Are there back-ups?	The GTU's DE programs utilize several educational technologies that provide students with productive learning and interaction. GTU uses the Moodle Learning Management system for all online, courses. Moodle's design and offerings are ideal for graduate theological education due to its intentional focus on social constructivist pedagogy through built-in collaborative tools including forums, wikis, group assignments, knowledge building repositories and more. Moodle's interface is easy to use and requires less bandwidth to access. VoiceThread is a collaborative tool that students and instructors can use to create multimedia presentations and engage in more dynamic and robust asynchronous discussions. VoiceThread allows for both the instructor's and the students' "voices" to be heard, not only in terms of perspective but actual voice and video. VoiceThread serves as a great alternative to text-based discussion forums. Panopto is a cloud-based video software that enables instructors to screencast various types of multimedia, edit videos, and add quizzes to lectures. Additionally, Panopto offers an enhanced viewing experience to students with closed captions, key word searches, the ability to take notes within the lecture, and the opportunity to participate in Panopto discussion forums focused on the instructor's lecture. Zoom is a helpful tool for engaging synchronous discussion due to its robust screenshare functionality, whiteboard capabilities, polling opportunities, closed captions, annotation features, text-chat, and more.	No follow-up required.

Student Support Services: What is the institution's capacity for providing advising, counseling, library, computing services, academic support and other services appropriate to distance modality? What do data show about the effectiveness of the services?	Regarding support for DE at the GTU, The Associate Dean for Teaching, Learning and Assessment offers Moodle training to incoming students during Fall and Spring orientations. Additionally, students are encouraged to reach out to the Digital Learning Department if they have any questions, or would like to receive personalized training on distance learning technologies. DE Students also have access to a detailed help page that includes FAQs regarding Moodle, VoiceThread, Panopto, and Grammarly along with video tutorials and step-by-step instructions for using all the educational software provided by the GTU for their classes. Regarding library resources, distance learning students have access to numerous tutorial videos on accessing electronic journals and ebooks. The reference librarians also encourage students to send them chat messages when they need any assistance with research. Regarding advising, the GTU currently has an advising framework guide that will soon be revised by the Associate Deans to include distance learning considerations for both advisor and advisee. This guide will include questions that should be asked and topics that should be covered during advising sessions.	The team agrees with the institution that an advising plan be created that addresses the nuances that arise in the experience of students enrolled in DE courses.

Faculty. Who teaches the courses, e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct? Do they teach only online courses? In what ways does the institution ensure that distance learning faculty are oriented, supported, and integrated appropriately into the academic life of the institution? How are faculty involved in curriculum development and assessment of student learning? How are faculty trained and supported to teach in this modality?	Full-time, part-time, and adjunct faculty at the GTU teach online courses. Mostly adjunct and part-time faculty teach in the two fully online certificate programs. Full-time, part-time, and adjuncts teach courses that can be counted toward the Online MA program. Regarding assessment and curriculum development, faculty analyze data from assessment reports and use the results to identify areas of improvement for student learning and success. Faculty also participate in the program review process that takes place every 5 years. For the online MA, at least three faculty members serve on the committee and help to produce an extensive self-study report for each program that focuses on 1) program quality, 2) program financial sustainability, 3) and strategic alignment and planning for the future. Regarding training and support for teaching online, the Digital Learning Department provides hands-on 1:1 and group training sessions by request, Digital Learning workshops each semester, on-boarding sessions for new faculty, and a repository of Digital Learning resources and tutorials that faculty can access at any time.	No follow-up required.
Curriculum and Delivery. Who designs the distance education programs and courses? How are they approved and evaluated? Are the programs and courses comparable in content, outcomes and quality to on-ground offerings? (Submit credit hour report.)	The DE programs are approved by the Academic Committee of the Board of Trustees. The distance education programs are designed and evaluated by the academic affairs department and assessed on a yearly basis. The programs and courses are compatible in content, outcomes, and quality to the on-ground offerings. For the online MA program, the learning outcomes are the same as the in-person program. Additionally, online students are required to submit the same milestones as in-person students and take the same number of required courses. Both the online and in-person MA program undergo a thorough assessment process each year through the MA assessment committee.	No follow-up required.

Faculty Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction. How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for "faculty-initiated, regular and substantive interaction"? How is compliance monitored? What activities count as student/instructor substantive interaction"?	Regular and substantive interaction is monitored primarily by the course instructor(s) along with a teaching assistant (if applicable). Instructors are also encouraged to utilize the "activity completion" option in Moodle to more easily and accurately track whether or not students are engaging with the various course requirements. Instructors are expected to assign a participation grade for each student that reflects their engagement during the session in order to monitor interaction. Along with faculty, the Associate Dean for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment and the Digital Learning Assistant monitor faculty-initiated regular substantive interaction. Monitoring occurs by accessing participation logs in the Moodle LMS for all courses in the online MA program. The data in the participation log include all days/times when the instructor and students accessed the course, along with what activities were accessed during each user's session in the course. This data can provide evidence of faculty-initiated interactions and keep track of student engagement in the course.	No follow-up required.
Academic Engagement. How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for "Academic Engagement"? How is compliance monitored? What activities contribute to academic engagement?	Faculty can achieve academic engagement by conducting intentional interactions throughout the course through direct instruction, evaluation and feedback, actively facilitating discussion, and leading or facilitating instructional activities. Similarly to regular and substantive interaction, academic engagement is monitored primarily by the instructor or TA. Also, the Associate Dean for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment and the Digital Learning Assistant monitor academic engagement through accessing participation logs in the Moodle LMS for all courses in the online MA program.	No follow-up required.

State Licensure Requirements. Describe, as appropriate, the institution's process for disclosing to students how state licensure requirements are met by distance education programs, whether licensure requirements are not met by programs, or whether the institution has not determined where licensure requirements are met by the programs.	The GTU's DE programs are not designed to meet state licensure requirements.	N/A

Student Identification Verification and Privacy. What is the institution's process for student verification, e.g., a secure login and pass code; proctored examinations; other technologies or practices that are effective in verifying student identification? What precautions are taken by the institution to protect technology from cyber security intrusions on its or outsourced systems? Are additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity disclosed at the time of registration or enrollment?	The GTU student identity verification policy is as follows: The admitted student must provide a deposit and submit a notarized copy of their government-issued identification. Admitted students are responsible for the cost of notarizing their government-issued ID and sending the notarized copy to the GTU Admissions Office. A staff member from the Admissions Office or Student Services will meet with the student via video conferencing to verify the government issued-ID. The GTU Consortial Registrar creates student email addresses and provides login information to each admitted student. All accounts are created with a secure one-time PIN. Students are prompted to change their passwords on their first login to a password that meets certain specifications. Also, throughout their program, students will be prompted to verify that each assignment they upload to the GTU LMS is written and submitted by them. Below is the text the students must verify to upload their assignment: For this assignment, I make the following truthful statements: • I am the owner of this Moodle account, and I am registered for this course. • This assignment is my own work, and it is not written by another person or AI. • I did not plagiarize another person's work with the intention of submitting it as my own. I have cited references where I have borrowed someone else's ideas. Lastly, students are expected to correspond and meet with their faculty advisors, program directors, administrative staff, and faculty instructors through video conferencing during each term and throughout their programs. Faculty and administrative staff can also verify the student's identity during these videoconferencing sessions.	No follow-up required though GTU might want to update the truthful statements to include Generative Artificial Intelligence, such as Chat.GPT.

Retention and Graduation. What data on retention and graduation are collected on students taking online courses and programs? What do these data show? What disparities are evident? Are rates comparable to on-ground programs and to other institutions' online offerings? If any concerns exist, how are these being addressed?	For the IRC and ICP certificate programs, retention and graduate rates are collected through the program Directors and academic affairs assistant. This data has shown that retention rates are low for the IRC program. For the past two years, about half the students that begin the program actually finish it. The Director of this program is working with the Dean and the marketing department to both identify the cause of low retention and to find ways to increase the retention rates of the program. Retention or grad rates for the online MA program are not yet available since the program will launch in Fall 2023. Once this data is available it will be compared to the on-ground offerings for the MA program.	The team agrees that further study of the low retention rate of the IRC is warranted. Futher, the team agrees that review of the retention rate data from the new 2023 MA program is important.
Student Learning. How does the institution assess student learning for online programs and courses? Is this process comparable to that used in on-ground courses? What are the results of student learning assessment? How do these compare with learning results of on-ground students, if applicable, or with other online offerings?	Each distance learning program goes through an assessment review each year. The ICP and IRC programs undergo an assessment process conducted by the Directors of the Certificate programs, the Dean, and the Associate Dean for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment. At the end of the certificate program year, students are asked to submit a paper or a final project that demonstrates their achievement of the program learning outcomes. For the chaplaincy program, the student chooses a paper that best reflects their work with chaplaincy. For the Interreligious Studies certificate, students are required to develop a capstone project during the last course of the program. The Director of each program and a second reader (faculty or advisory board member) evaluate the submissions with a rubric that uses the program learning outcomes as criteria. In addition, students are also asked to complete a self-assessment survey with additional questions about what they perceive as the program's strengths and weaknesses. For the online MA program, the assessment process will look similar to the in-person process. Since the online MA program began in September 2023, there are no student learning data as of yet.	No follow-up required.

Contracts with Vendors. Are there any arrangements with outside vendors concerning the infrastructure, delivery, development, or instruction of courses? If so, do these comport with the policy on *Agreements with Unaccredited Entities?*	The GTU has no arrangements with outside vendors concerning the infrastructure, delivery, development, or instruction of courses.	No follow-up required.
Quality Assurance Processes: How are the institution's quality assurance processes designed or modified to cover distance education? What evidence is provided that distance education programs and courses are educationally effective?	For the certificate programs, quality assurance processes include the yearly assessment of capstone projects outlined above. Additionally, students fill out course evaluations for every course they complete in the programs. These course evaluations are reviewed by the instructor of each course along with the Directors of each program. Also, certificate students fill out a survey at the end of their program with questions focusing on whether they felt the courses helped them to achieve the program learning outcomes. These evaluations are read by the program director and faculty reviewer. Improvements for each program have been made based on the assessment process and course evaluation reviews. For the ICP program, the 2020-21 assessment cycle showed that students were previously asked to submit a paper demonstrating their best work with interreligious studies. The students submitted work that showed they could accurately describe at least one religious tradition with appreciation. However, the program learning outcomes required engagement and dialogue with two or more religious traditions. Students are now required to complete a capstone project written in their final course of the program that includes explicit instructions to discuss multiple religions in dialogue. This change has improved alignment between the learning outcomes and the artifacts submitted for the program.	No follow-up required.