

REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM
For Reaffirmation of Accreditation

To Pardee RAND Graduate School

October 27-30, 2020

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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

A. Description of Institution and Accreditation History

The Pardee RAND Graduate School (PRGS) was established in 1970 as the educational arm of the RAND corporation, a global non-profit policy think tank. Since that time, the school has offered a single Ph.D. program in Public Policy Analysis, and remains the only such program situated within an independent public policy research organization. Faculty are primarily drawn from the doctoral-level staff within RAND’s various research units, and provide course instruction and student advising/mentoring along with serving on dissertation committees and supervising on-the-job-training (OJT) experiences (300 days of OJT are required of each student and most graduate with 500-700 days). A dissertation is required for the PhD.

The PRGS has spent the last six years engaged in a broad redesign of their doctoral program that started with the question: *If we could build a public policy school from the ground up to open in 2030, what would it look like?* This redesign effort involved a wide array of internal personnel, external stakeholders, and a broad range of external organizations as “precedents.” It led PRGS to three major structural changes: First, the program now includes three streams of study, each with its own learning objectives and requirements: *Research, Analysis and Design* (which closely resemble the previous program), *Community-Partnered Policy and Action*, and *Technology Applications and Implications*. Students in all streams complete a set of common core courses, and may take courses from other streams as appropriate to their particular interests and research. Second, every student is now exposed to four critical skills/perspective areas (i.e., *Communications, Ethics, Global Perspectives, and Social Justice and Racial Equity*) that have been embedded across the curriculum. Third, more experiential elements have been strengthened and/or incorporated, including a bootcamp for all entering students, a Policy Design Studio, a Tech and Narrative Lab, and long-term community partnerships and associated community-based externships and residencies, in addition to the continuation of RAND research project-centered OJT.

PRGS's regional accreditation history began in 1970 with WSCUC Commission approval for a preliminary visit for Correspondent status. The school progressed to accreditation candidacy in 1972, received initial accreditation in 1975, and this accreditation was subsequently reaffirmed in 1980, 1985, 1990, 2000, and 2011. In 2016, an Interim Review was conducted and a WSCUC Commission Action letter was issued that received the Interim Report and scheduled the school for an Offsite Review in 2019 and Accreditation Visit in 2020. However, in 2017, the school was approved for participation in the first cohort of institutions for the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR), which this team report reflects. PRGS does not have any off-campus locations or distance education programs for consideration through this TPR-based review.

B. Description of Team's Review Process

The review team was formally constituted by WASC on June 29th, and the team chair, assistant chair, and WSCUC staff liaison held an informal videoconference with the PRGS dean and ALO on August 10th. On August 24th, the review team received the institutional report and associated materials for the Thematic Pathway Review (TPR), and members were assigned as primary and secondary leads for the review of each Standard as well as the institution's three submitted TPR themes. In preparation for the Accreditation Visit, the review team worked individually and collaboratively to gather, analyze, and interpret the provided information, and held three video conferences on September 9, September 23, and October 22 to prepare for the remote Accreditation Visit. Over this time, the review team also worked with the institution to obtain additional information and documents and to develop the visit schedule. The visit began in the afternoon of October 27 and concluded in the late morning of October 30. Over the visit, the review team met with sixteen different groups, including open meetings with faculty, staff, and students, with interspersed team-only sessions. The WSCUC-based confidential email account received two communications that were consistent with broader emerging themes during the visit. Commendations and Recommendations were developed and presented by the review team chair

to the institution on the morning of October 30.

C. Institution's Reaccreditation Report and Update: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting

Evidence

The institutional report was clearly written in accordance with the general guidelines for the new Thematic Pathway Review, with numerous appendices and links providing additional detailed information and documentation. Given the highly focused nature and recent redesign of its doctoral program, PRGS was extremely helpful in clarifying a limited number of pre-visit review team questions and provided all additional requested materials prior to the remote Accreditation Visit. In light of the myriad visit sessions, the Institution Report was thorough, insightful, and evidenced-based, and involved faculty, staff, and students—notably, the lead writer for each of the three themes was a student.

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ESSAYS

Component 1: Response to previous Commission actions

Based on the 2011 EER Team Report, the 2011 WSCUC Commission Action letter emphasized three areas for continued attention and development by PRGS: Refining and conducting program review, improving degree completion, and serving the underrepresented. Based on the 2016 Interim (Mid-Cycle) Report, which was informed in part by findings from and actions around PRGS's 2014 program review, the 2016 Commission letter noted progress in all three areas, and recommended continued efforts with respect to (1) further development of program review with an emphasis on mapping student learning and assessment across courses, on-the-job training, dissertation research, etc.; (2) expanding the pipeline of minority students and faculty within the school, and (3) improving student success rates of underrepresented populations (e.g., African American, Hispanic/Latino) and international students. Based on the institutional report, requested materials, and discussions during the Accreditation Visit, PRGS appears to be progressing on all three fronts as summarized below and

evidenced throughout this report.

Program Review: As part of their broader program redesign, PRGS has developed an updated set of learning objectives for the program as a whole as well as its three streams, and these objectives have been collaboratively mapped to the formal curriculum as a means to promote curricular coherence, connection, and intention. Broader distribution of this curriculum map is nascent given the recent full implementation of their broader program redesign, with future plans to address additional curricular components, such as the dissertation and on-the-job training. PRGS has planned a formal external program review for 2023, by which several cohorts of students will have matriculated into the redesigned program and again in 2026 or 2027 when the students in these first cohorts should be approaching graduation or have graduated. This commitment is laudable as it will provide an important opportunity to reflect on the impact of the program redesign and identify potential refinements and modifications.

Expanding Opportunity: PRGS has actively sought to increase equity and diversity within its student applicant pool through a variety of outreach efforts. For example, application fees are waived for applicants who have participated in any of over 30 recognized programs (e.g., Congressional Black Caucus Fellows, Mellon Mays Undergraduate Scholars) or have graduated from a variety of HBCUs and HSIs. Furthermore, in response to Commission recommendations, PRGS has continued to refine and expand its Next Generation Initiative (now termed the Faculty Leaders Program (FLP)), which now comprises over 90 faculty member participant alumni from over 50 institutions (e.g., Morehouse College, Xavier, Florida International University). This FLP effort promotes a network approach to connecting PRGS to a diverse set of faculty from myriad feeder programs and facilitates the infusion of public policy issues and content into their respective courses with the intent of bringing new voices into public policy. Recently evaluation of the FLP has identified additional opportunities to strengthen the program (e.g., more one-on-one engagement with RAND faculty during the program and continued connections after the program), and PRGS is carefully considering these and

other findings for their future program iterations. Though Pardee RAND cohort sizes are relatively small (historically typically 20-30 students per year, now increasing to 30 – 35 students), these combined efforts appear to be producing the intended outcome of diversifying incoming cohorts, with a tripling of Hispanic/Latinx/Puerto-Rican students (n=15) and a doubling of African American students (n=6) in the more recent 2012-2019 cohorts compared to the past 2004-2011 cohorts.

Student Success: PRGS has continued to invest in student retention and graduation, with a strong focus on diversity and equity, since their 2016 interim report. The institution's future plans to nearly double their cohort sizes represents both opportunities and risks for diversity and equity, and in response PRGS recently funded a part-time Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Advisor and formed a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group in service to develop a more coordinated care approach to student support (e.g., mentoring, mental health, career services, etc.), especially for historically underserved populations. As with recruitment in the previous section, these ongoing efforts appear to be positively impacting retention and graduation efforts, though sample sizes are small: While only 36% of African American and/or Hispanic students in the 2003-2012 cohorts graduated, PRGS projects that at least 73% of Hispanic students and 67% of African American students in the 2012-2019 cohorts will graduate based on the fact that a third of each population had already graduated as of the submission of their institutional report and the number of students currently meeting completion benchmarks. In addition to these current efforts and outcomes, beginning with the 2020 cohort, PRGS is annually awarding two Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Award (IDEA) three-year scholarships to support students from historically underrepresented populations, who have overcome socio-economic challenges, and/or are first-generation college graduates.

Component 2: Compliance: Review under WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements; Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators

Standard 1. Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

The RAND Corporation first conceived of what is now the PRGS as a means of establishing the new field of policy analysis and diversifying and stimulating new areas of research and scholarship, which remain key hallmarks of the program today. As a nonprofit school located within the RAND Corporation, PRGS's mission is "to provide the next generation of policy leaders an unsurpassed education in policy analysis." This mission is clearly articulated in the institutional report, and is communicated throughout the institution to students, faculty, and staff through means such as the web page and student handbook (CFR 1.1). The values of academic freedom, excellence, and diversity undergird their overarching institutional goals of teaching and learning, scholarly inquiry, research, and innovation. Pardee RAND's mission and values are widely shared by the community of students, faculty, staff, and leadership, and were demonstrated in a variety of ways in the institutional report and throughout the remote Accreditation Visit. For example, PRGS has a robust Prevention of Harassment, Discrimination, and Retaliation policy, and it proactively recruits diverse students (e.g., Diversity Scholarship and McNair Scholars Program, as well as Faculty Leader Program universities) (CFR 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6).

Faculty are evaluated through a multi-source review, including student course evaluations within PRGS and as part of the cyclical performance appraisals of the broader RAND Corporation (CFR 1.3).

Deepening and fully integrating the school's newly expanded commitment to social and racial justice—in both the curriculum and in student access and success measures—and documenting this integration will be important for PRGS and its broader community in the coming years. The school has already instituted a number of measures along these lines, and of particular note are (1) the important convening of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion task force to work with the Assistant Dean for Admissions to enhance diversity recruitment efforts, (2) the creation of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Working Group; and (3) the creation of the Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Advisor position. As a call to action that potentially has broader societal implications, the creation and inclusion of the Social Justice and Racial Equity cross-cutting thread is a major advance in the development of the institution's values. This effort and others, such as clarifying learning outcomes and deepening direct community engagement (e.g., in the broader Los Angeles region and the relatively remote community of Sitka, Alaska), should truly demonstrate what it means to be a nationally acclaimed graduate program that values its role in influencing the lives of its stakeholders at the local, national, and international levels. Consequently, although PRGS's educational objectives are clearly articulated in the institutional report and inform activities at the program level (CFR 1.2), ongoing attention will be required to ensure the integration and success of the new Social Justice and Racial Equity thread and the concurrent institutional endeavor to diversify its student body. Outcomes have been developed for its degree program and are accessible through their Student Handbook (CFR 1.2). Pardee RAND publishes the Student Achievement report online that makes information available to the PRGS community and the broader public. The Student Achievement Report provides information about PRGS's graduation rates, time-to-degree, and job placement. Faculty profiles, financial information, as well as other data are also accessible through reports on their website and the institution's annual reports. PRGS tracks several forms of student success data, publishes completion and time-to-degree averages on their website, and disseminates the information as an internal report.

The commitment to academic freedom is a strong institutional value, articulated in PRGS's faculty and student handbooks (CFR 1.3). Pardee RAND is a school within the independent nonprofit RAND Corporation, and also has its own Board of Governors separate from the RAND Corporation Board of Trustees. However there are members of the RAND Corporation Board of Trustees who sit on the graduate school Board of Governors; external or internal interference in its activities was not evident (CFR 1.5). The transparency of program learning outcomes is commendable (CFRs 1.6, 1.7). The review team was easily able to identify policies governing student complaint and grievance processes within the

student handbook. Policies concerning tuition and fees, financial aid, and graduation rates are also easily accessible. PRGS complies with reporting requirements to WSCUC as requested and on an annual basis (CFR 1.8).

The review team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 1.

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions

PRGS has demonstrated a commitment to evaluate evidence of learning and support student success. The institution's mission is "to provide the next generation of policy leaders an unsurpassed education in the fundamental tools of policy analysis." The breadth and depth of curriculum and commitment to hands-on learning clearly guide the meaning of the degree as evidenced by the academics section of the website, the student handbook, and appendix 9 of the institutional report. These materials illustrate the institution's content and rigor via the academic program requirements, program descriptions, program objectives, descriptions of each stream, and a clear overview of the program including achievement necessary for graduation (CFR 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.12). The institution took a team approach to developing outcomes, streams, and curriculum mapping. Learning outcomes are stated in the course syllabi and in the curriculum map (CFR 2.4). Accreditation Visit interviews supported the shared understanding of course learning outcomes among staff and faculty. The intentional crafting and scaffolding of course learning outcomes assist faculty preparing to teach a course they have not previously taught. Faculty experienced with teaching a given course expressed confidence in walking new faculty through the course learning outcomes and demonstrating how the course and its outcomes connect to other courses, program learning outcomes and the curriculum map. Students also confirmed their understanding of course learning outcomes and their appreciation for the explicit integration of course content. While processes have been in place over the years, faculty, students, and administrators

shared that in the past courses often seemed isolated from one another in both development and implementation, but that the recent program redesign has promoted a more intentional integration in service to students and faculty. Additionally, the recent program redesign has sparked processes to share syllabus templates and curriculum maps. This common understanding of connections between the many complex elements of the program is essential, and both the evidence and Accreditation Visit conversations demonstrate the institution's commitment to an integrated and interdisciplinary approach moving forward.

The PRGS program requires students to engage in study of policy analysis, quantitative analysis, economic analysis, social and behavioral science, and ethics. Students also participate in project-based learning through an innovative policy design studio approach. Additionally, students choose elective courses that align with their interests and passions. Students enter the graduate program through one of three academic policy streams (*Research, Analysis, and Design*; *Community-Partnered Policy and Action*; and *Technology Applications and Implications*) based on their long-term career goals and specific qualifications. In addition to providing rigorous academics, the institution is committed to providing support services, mentoring, career services, and dissertation support, etc. (appendix 8, CFR 2.13). Career services support appears to be a program strength. Staff meet with students early in their graduate school career and provide ongoing individualized support in addition to providing speakers that support different streams.

Placement rates are tracked through various approaches (e.g., direct inquiries, LinkedIn) and broader student success and satisfaction are assessed via surveys of students, alumni, and employers. According to PRGS's website, nearly 100% of graduates find work in the field of their choice within six months of graduation, many with multiple job offers, and this statement was corroborated during the remote Accreditation Visit. While specific student support areas appear to be intentionally designed and effective, there appear to be numerous opportunities to increase coordination and integration in service to a more holistic approach to student support, particularly for international students who have

additional challenges (e.g., F1 visa restrictions, cultural adjustment, etc.) and fewer experiential learning opportunities due to national security restrictions on RAND project work, etc. Experiential learning opportunities are increasing for all students with the addition of the Tech and Narrative Lab projects and residencies and the Community-Partnered externships and residencies.

The redesign focuses on out-of-class learning experiences that are well aligned to the mission and clearly rigorous. As documented in the institutional report and appendices 5 and 9 (Curriculum Map, Curriculum at a Glance), PRGS's attention to building off of students' prior knowledge of subject matter to create a learning environment in a structured approach is admirable. Experiential learning is a principal component of the program, and provides students with opportunities to practice, generalize, and apply what they have learned (CFR 2.2a, CFR 2.5). All students must complete a minimum of 300 days of on the job training (OJT), and many surpass that minimum by the time they graduate with most graduating with between 500- 700 days of OJT . RAND researchers serve as the direct supervisors/mentors for the OJT, which is one of the ways that RAND researchers participate as faculty in the program. Challenging and high standards are outlined in the Student Handbook (page 50), described in the IEEI, and showcased within the sample syllabi. The program focuses on student engagement and application via OJT and the pilot externships and residencies, which are expanding within the redesigned program. Syllabi as well as the portfolio overview help to provide needed evidence (CFR 2.5). One of the hallmarks of the program is student engagement in experiential learning, and, while the institution has been collecting data, they are formalizing processes and envisioning how to best assess success for the redesigned program with a target deadline of the end of the 2020-21 academic year. The intention is to meet regularly to develop this process and include key stakeholders. The institution expressed a commitment to assure meaningful data that is collected, analyzed, disseminated, and institutionalized. They are working to bring together older measures and newer measures to assure consistency and comparability so that students in different streams clearly receive the same degree. The institution acknowledges that ongoing assessment and continuous improvement

will be critical, and the review team observed the critical need to continue to refine and strengthen their assessment measures.

PRGS tracks several forms of student success data, publishes completion and time-to-degree averages on its external website and disseminates the information as an internal report. On the pedagogic level, and as referenced in appendix 24 (Assessment Infrastructure) and as itemized in the Compliance with WSCUC Standards and Federal Requirements Worksheet and Forms (pages 21, 22, and 23), the institution effectively establishes standards of performance and regularly assesses the effectiveness of teaching and learning through review of course evaluations, qualifying exams, student reviews, syllabi reviews and faculty workshops. The institution ensures that its expectations for student learning are embedded in the standards that faculty use to evaluate work.

In 2014, the institution implemented a program review process that included two external reviewers. Further review led to the design of a curricular map and a formal decision-making process to introduce and approve new program elements. Appendix 24 (Assessment Infrastructure) provides information about the assessment infrastructure, whereas the Student Handbook (appendix 3) provides expectations and details on standards of performance. The institutional report included a description of the program review process, and the report analyzes the need for the next program review to carefully reflect upon and evaluate components of the redesign (CFR 2.6, 2.7).

The institution is part of the non-profit RAND Corporation, and the research standards align to those set forth on the RAND website. The program curriculum on the institutional website clearly reflects innovation, and the redesign's use of streams shows innovation and opportunity for creativity and scholarship. The RAND Corporation first conceived of the graduate program as a means of establishing the academic field of policy analysis and diversifying and stimulating new areas of research and scholarship, which remain key hallmarks of the program. The relatively recent development of the *Research, Analysis, and Design* stream and the integration of research in the other streams showcase this commitment (CFR 2.8). Faculty are evaluated through

multi-source review, including student course evaluations within Pardee RAND and as part of the cyclical performance appraisals of the RAND Corporation (CFR 3.2) The dissertation process is a critical component of the program and detailed in appendices 21 and 22 (CFR 2.8). Faculty are non-traditional in that they continue their primary RAND responsibilities while serving. The review team's discussions with faculty revealed opportunities to develop resources for faculty development that are grounded in pedagogical best-practices. With this nontraditional approach, faculty appear to wear many hats and would benefit from focused support for understanding and assuring course content alignment with broader program outcomes. Appendix 23 provides faculty hiring criteria (CFR 2.9) and describes the three ways to become a Pardee RAND faculty member, which are teaching, OJT mentoring, and serving on a dissertation committee.

The institution has been invested in the redesign process for more than five years, in which they have researched a new summative assessment mechanism (portfolio) that could fully encapsulate the learning and newly designed program streams. The institution held meetings with faculty, students, alumni, board members, and school leadership to discuss the design of the PhD program, how it could be improved, whether new models could augment learning and provide better evidence of mastery. The emerging portfolio approach has potential to showcase student individual creativity and work through a flexible approach that would complement more summative high-stakes approaches, such as qualifying exams. The decision to pursue portfolios seems to be a widely supported institutional decision that will require thoughtful implementation. The institution shared that part of the rationale for portfolios was to help students identify gaps in what they aim to achieve compared to what they have actually accomplished, which would in turn help identify specific courses and experiential learning opportunities to fill those gaps. In addition to this formative use, portfolios are also envisioned as a summative resource for students to share with potential employers, etc. The institution has developed a portfolio evaluation tool that should provide meaningful feedback for both students and faculty with respect to student progress through the various streams, curriculum, and overall PhD program. During the remote

Accreditation Visit, faculty and students expressed that learning outcomes could be more clearly articulated and communicated.

The institutional website provides graduation and retention data. Appendix 24 provides the assessment infrastructure information regarding data collection, analysis, etc. The institution collects data needed to evaluate student characteristics and student success (CFR 2.10). Student demographics data provided in the institutional report shows that, in 2019-2020, the program enrollment was 110 students. In Fall 2020, enrollment was 33 students, the largest class to date. The average age is 29, and 75% have advanced degrees. Ethnicity data shows that from 2012-2019, there were 15 hispanic students and 6 African American students.

The institution provides information about plans for growth in co-curricular activities, which includes aligning curricular and co-curricular components to assure alignment between the learning objectives and the redesigned program. The externships, residencies, and hands-on learning are integral to this growth, and appropriate for a doctoral level program, which has different standards than undergraduate programs for co-curricular work. Research at RAND, externships, etc. clearly support students' personal and professional development (CFR 2.11). The review team underscores the importance of that integration between existing activities, new components and the innovation implementation.

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

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

Faculty and Staff (CFRs 3.1, 3.2, 3.3)

PRGS has a well-qualified body of faculty and staff with 203 faculty members, of which 136 are core faculty and 57 are affiliate faculty. Core Faculty include those that participate in one of more of the

following: teaching a course, chairing a student's dissertation committee, participating in two or more dissertation committees, supervising On the Job Training (OJT), serving on the admissions, curriculum and/or testing committee, and/or serving in some substantive ongoing role within PRGS. Affiliate faculty assist in teaching courses, serving as a student's advisor in the pre-dissertation phase, supervising OJT for one student on a project, or serving as a member of at least one dissertation committee. PRGS faculty members are not tenured but are nearly all full-time members of RAND's research staff. The institution provided a sample of CVs from their core faculty members and from their OJT- and dissertation-associated faculty. PRGS faculty positions are awarded in the beginning of the academic year based on previous year's activities and likely activities in the next year. Otherwise, a faculty appointment lapses, and with it the title. Only current members of the faculty are entitled to be called professors at the institution. Faculty are evaluated via course evaluations and personnel evaluation conducted by RAND on the following metrics: Research Quality, Intellectual Contributions, Teamwork and Mentoring, Resource Management, Dissemination and Impact, and Entrepreneurship and Client Relations.

PRGS also employs 10 full time administrative staff members including the school's Dean, Associate Dean, and Assistant Dean, and two of the three faculty lead positions. In conversations with the faculty and staff, it became evident that while the administrative staff was extremely capable and well qualified, they were all wearing multiple hats and, in some ways, participating in duplicative work in serving the student population. For example, students reported in their open forum session that they often received conflicting information when approaching different staff members about issues or concerns. The staff also seemed to be aware of this challenge as it was raised in their open forum session along with a statement that they were actively working on ways to ensure that information, decisions, etc. are shared widely across the institution. The review team recommends that as the institution evolves and the reimagined program scales, the institution embrace a sustainable approach to articulating clear roles and responsibilities for staff and administrators in order to strengthen and

sustain institutional communication and capacity as well as student success and to also identify specific points-of-contact for specific issues, questions, etc. to ensure that students, faculty, community partners, and other stakeholders are better served.

The institution currently provides funding to support faculty developing new or revising existing courses. It holds very few formal faculty development workshops. Staff development for the faculty is managed at the corporate level where individual research staff members can request funding for professional development. While the review team commends the institution for empowering the faculty to choose their own training mechanisms, the institution is encouraged to develop faculty and student-centered workshops and professional development that will assist with better serving the ever-changing student population at PRGS.

The review team further recommends PRGS strengthen resources and opportunities for faculty development that are grounded in pedagogical best-practices, focused on the program outcomes, and responsive to the academic and professional needs of a diverse and growing student body. Finally, the review team also encourages the institution to ensure regular attention to staff development.

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

PRGS provided detailed budget summaries for the last several years that show financial stability and no operating deficit. The institution relies on three primary revenue sources (i.e., tuition, endowment draw, and fundraising), and is required to provide a detailed annual financial and narrative plan as part of RAND's broader financial planning process. This plan is reviewed annually by a RAND financial analyst assigned to PRGS, the school's Board of Governors, and is approved by the CFO and CEO of RAND.

PRGS is committed to graduating its students with the lowest possible debt burden, and has

focused attention on increasing the number of endowed scholarships and dissertation awards and other funding opportunities for students in recent years. Various provided documents demonstrate that the institution has invested significantly in the redesign of its program, particularly in the expansion of facilities and staffing for the Tech and Narrative Lab, and the Policy Design Studios, and the community partnerships. These plans have been well-specified and the short- and long-term needs identified.

The institution provided evidence from the Student Handbook which states that students are provided with institutional equipment that is monitored and updated on an ongoing basis. This equipment contains program-relevant and course-specific software packages, which are typically installed on their computers wirelessly. The institution also maintains a subscription to over 200 databases that provides students with full text articles. RAND's Department of Information Services provides a variety of research resources and collaborative tools, including a help desk that assists with many general computing questions and connectivity issues. The information provided in the Student Handbook pertains only to students, and no comparable information was provided regarding faculty/staff training and use of technology, though the RAND helpdesk appears to serve the PRGS and RAND, population, including faculty and staff. The review team encourages the institution to further develop training and support for faculty and staff members who use technology across the institution.

Organizational Structures and Decision Making Processes (CFRs 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10)

PRGS conducts reviews of all of its leadership. The PRGS dean is included in RAND's group of executives that reports to and is reviewed by the CEO and president of RAND. The executive performance review process is annual, and like staff processes, includes a self-assessment as well as a supervisory review. All other school leaders are evaluated using a standard performance evaluation process. The self-evaluation is reviewed by the individual's manager, who provides both written and oral feedback (CFR 3.6).

While the institution is currently refining their organizational chart, the review team was provided with a copy of the main administrative staff structure during the Accreditation Visit. As previously mentioned, the review team commonly heard from both students and staff about a lack of shared clarity regarding who does what within the institution. The review team recommends that the institution clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of staff and administrators to ensure that stakeholders are better served. Clarifying such roles and responsibilities will also help ensure a more sustainable environment as the institution grows.

The institution provided a job description of the dean (who is also the chief executive officer) and the associate dean (who is also the chief financial officer) (CFR 3.8). The dean has the full, primary, and executive responsibility for PRGS and acts as chief executive and operating officer in such areas as advisor to the RAND board of trustees and the school's Board of Governors on all matters pertaining to the PRGS. The associate dean serves as the chief assistant to the dean in areas of strategic development, operational leadership, budget development, and administration in order to support and advance the schools activities and ambitions.

PRGS has a Board of Governors with up to 28 members, including at least three members of the RAND Board of Trustees (Pardee RAND Board of Governors Charter). One of the three RAND Trustees chairs the PRGS Board of Governors. Other members are specified to include one alumnus, at least five with significant academic experience, and up to 19 from diverse professional communities. The Charter specifies that the Board of Governors shall "[c]ounsel the Board of Trustees on matters relating to the strategy and operations of Pardee RAND." One of the Board of Governors' three meetings per year includes one joint meeting with the RAND Board of Trustees. According to the Charter, the RAND Board of Trustees is to receive a report from the PRGS Board of Governors at each of its meetings; minutes of a number of RAND Board of Trustee meetings were provided to document such reports. The Board of Governors meeting minutes indicate compliance with the regular engagement in self-review and training to enhance effectiveness. At every meeting for which minutes were reviewed, PRGS

presentations were made by students, faculty, alumni, and/or administrators (CFR 3.9).

The institution provided examples of faculty leadership via several committee examples, including the Faculty Committee on Curriculum and Appointment (FCCA), Admissions Committee, Grievance Committee, Student Review Committee, Dissertation Committee, and Qualifying Exams Committee (CFR 3.7). Of the 11 members of the FCCA, four are faculty members elected by the faculty and two are faculty appointed by the Dean. The FCCA's responsibilities include reviewing new courses, examining learning objectives and syllabi, and reviewing faculty qualifications. In the review team's meetings with faculty and with the FCCA, it was evident that the FCCA had historically focused primarily at the course level, and discussion clearly supported that the FCCA could play a more institutional role through reviewing policies and leading assessment, especially as the redesign moves forward (CFR 3.10). The review team recommends that the FCCA strengthen the documentation of its evidence-based curricular evolution so that institutional knowledge is transferred as membership changes.

The review team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 3.

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

PRGS has established a variety of quality assurance processes for their highly specialized and relatively small cohort graduate program, including a strong team-based approach focused on student-specific assessment and evaluation of coursework, portfolios, presentations, co-curricular endeavors, and dissertation research (CFR 4.1). This approach provides important formative student-specific feedback, and has informed myriad aspects of their major curricular redesign (see Theme 1). Future plans to develop and institutionalize portfolios (see Theme 3), while not novel as an assessment tool, holds great potential to facilitate not only assessment efforts, but also the professional development of students. Curriculum developments are considered and implemented through a decision-making

process involving administration, faculty, and students through the Faculty Committee on Curriculum and Appointments (CFR 4.1, 4.3). Given recent major curriculum redesign, PRGS has wisely committed to conducting an external program review in 2023 (CFR 4.2), which should provide an important opportunity for internal reflection and external feedback on programmatic changes and their impacts on student learning and success. Traditional institutional indicators of student success (e.g., retention, graduation) are tracked and shared (CFR 4.2), and PRGS is taking multiple approaches to address potential equity gaps within these indicators, and long term trends are consistent with substantive improvement.

As outlined in the institutional report and evident through the Accreditation Visit, the unique resource of a diverse population of RAND researchers represents a clear strength with respect to ready access to course content experts but potential challenges in terms of curriculum coherence and pedagogy (CFR 4.4). While the recent program redesign has provided a broad framework to help address the first challenge (i.e., curricular coherence), multiple discussions during the remote Accreditation Visit suggested a need for greater focus upon and investment in the second challenge (i.e., pedagogy) to help new and established faculty reflect upon and improve their teaching effectiveness.

The redesign of the PRGS program (see Theme 1) involved over 100 faculty, students, alumni, board members, and experts from the broader RAND community, and was informed, benchmarked, and broadened through interactions with over 30 external organizations (CFR 4.5). The various meetings during the Accreditation Visit revealed multiple pathways for input on curriculum from faculty, students, and other stakeholders.

PRGS benefits from the infrastructure and intellectual capital of the broader RAND corporation, with a PRGS Board of Governors as well as a RAND Board of Trustees that provides a mixture of oversight, evaluation, and counsel that appears to work within the organizational dynamics (CFR 4.6; see broader description in Standard 3). The institution appears sustainable with respect to operations,

finances, and infrastructure based on their qualification for the WSCUC Thematic Pathway Review, a review of a general fiscal summary within appendix 25 of the institutional report, and their strong association with the broader RAND corporation (CFR 4.7).

The review team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 4.

Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (IEEI)

While the IEEI requires narrative information on educational effectiveness by degree program, PRGS offers one PhD degree in Policy Analysis and chose to organize their IEEI document based on their three streams: *Research, Analysis, and Design, Community-Partnered Policy and Action, and Technology Application and Implications*. The IEEI provides an explanation of activities, the assessment, and process followed within the PhD program. The majority of the findings of the assessments outlined within the IEE appear to largely be used at the course level. The review team suggests that the institution consider mechanisms to share aggregate data collected from the annual assessment cycle across the broader institution. Such approaches would be useful in institutional reporting and planning, and could be leveraged as useful information for sharing with prospective students.

Component 8: Institution specific themes

Theme 1: Building an Integrated and Interdisciplinary Learning Environment

(CFRs 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 2.2b, 2.8, 3.2, 3.3)

PRGS's institutional report identified three themes as the foundation for its Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation. This section reacts to the first theme, Building an Integrated and Interdisciplinary Learning Environment. Toward the goal of building an integrated core curriculum, the institution focused on four cross-cutting threads developed as critical skills or perspectives: *Communications*,

Ethics, Global Perspectives, and Social Justice and Racial Equity. Three of the four cross-cutting threads have been used effectively as guides for sustained program rejuvenation, and are resulting in several specific outcomes and improvements. The fourth cross-cutting thread, *Social Justice and Racial Equity*, is relatively new, and holds promise equal to the others. The institution's work has been thorough, starting with careful curriculum mapping, and includes faculty engagement, and student communications. The work has also been flexible, pivoting in light of current affairs to include the cross-cutting thread of *Social Justice and Racial Equity* during the drafting of its institutional report (CFR 1.1, 1.2).

One of the outcomes of the cross-cutting threads is what the institution terms "intentional entanglement," which is the idea that complex policy problems will be solved or mitigated only by bringing multiple dispositions and diverse talent to bear. When students apply for admissions to PRGS, they apply to one of the three new policy engagement streams (i.e., *Research, Analysis, and Design; Community-Partnered Policy and Action; Technology Applications and Implications*), each of which is already integrative and interdisciplinary at its core. The integration of these cross-cutting threads through the three academic streams helps maintain cohort cohesion and is intended to expand student capacity to solve or mitigate complex policy problems.

The institution's curriculum mapping exercise was led by faculty stream leaders and was future-oriented, taking stock of current degree requirements against the question of what might the world demand of PRGS graduates in 2030. The intent was to broaden the field of policy analysis and resulted in (1) the addition of new courses including ethics, technology and society, network analysis, (2) the implementation of the institution's three new academic streams, and (3) a reworking of required and elective courses. The mapping exercise resulted in a cohesive yet dynamic curricular framework that will be further developed to serve as the basis of discussions with core faculty for program review and curricular refinement and revision moving forward. (CFR 2.2b)

The curriculum mapping exercise was the primary diagnostic tool for the institution's core curriculum redesign and included faculty engagement at several levels. For example, faculty in specific disciplines and sequences led discussions that included students and administrators to review specific courses. One notable result of interdisciplinary collaboration by the first-year core faculty was the development of an intensive five-day "bootcamp" experience for new students led by faculty as mentors. The institution notes that its students provided "the primary prod to enhance integration" and, building upon progress since the last reaffirmation of accreditation, credits student feedback with improved course syllabi to make learning objectives more explicit. The institution also plans to revise course evaluation forms and further develop mechanisms beyond the First- and Second-Year Reviews to collect and analyze student perceptions and perspectives as they progress through the program.

The first cross-cutting thread of *Ethics* highlighted and connected various ethical curricular components that were evident in the last reaffirmation of accreditation. The intended outcome was the expansion of ethical training beyond IRB compliance for human subjects research to "ensure that [their] graduates can affect change grounded in an understanding of the broader ethical environment and cognizant of the diversity of ethical perspectives," (institutional report, page 22) (CFR 2.8). Guided by Professor Ben Boudreaux's white paper on the topic, the institution initiated new courses in 2018 and, in the summer of 2019, tested student mastery of the content on qualifying exams. Co-curricular enhancements like the Ethics Hackathon and the addition of self-reflection exercises to the summer "bootcamp" experience reinforced curricular learning. Faculty involved in this ongoing project are now identifying and cataloguing instances where ethics is already integrated into coursework. The objectives of this work are largely outlined in appendix 10, "Ethics at Pardee RAND," and outcomes have been referenced within this report.

The institution's second cross-cutting thread of *Communications* builds off a decade-long initiative to improve communication skills among PRGS students, but especially those for whom English

is a second language. In addition to course-based assignments and other curricular components like the dissertation, the institution provides students with co-curricular opportunities like visualization workshops, poster sessions, and the Tech and Narrative Lab. Most recently, the institution launched the Virtual Writing Lab which will provide students with writing support throughout the core curriculum and at the dissertation stage (CFR 2.8, 2.9).

The third cross-cutting thread of *Global Perspectives* has flourished at least since 2004, when the naming gift from Frederick Pardee enabled research focused on the bottom billion and, in 2013, when Mr. Pardee funded the Initiative for Global Human Progress, which is geared toward improving the future of the human condition, particularly in regions in Asia and Africa. Funds have been used to support research projects, dissertations, and the student-led international speakers series. This cross-cutting thread intersects with the *Communications* thread at the Tech and Narrative lab, where a number of initiatives were supported including the development of an app to identify counterfeit malaria drugs. The institution will continue to expand this thread through the introduction of course electives and revision of core courses to diversify examples. Moreover, the goal of the *Community-Partnered Policy and Action* stream is to include international sites for community engaged research.

The fourth cross-cutting thread of *Social Justice and Racial Equity* is in the design phase and was announced only weeks before the submission of the institutional report. Although the formal planning process is currently underway, the institution has already added a course on intersectionality and working with diverse stakeholders and communities as part of the community-focused stream. The goal of this nascent thread is to empower graduates “with the training, resources, and information needed to effectively engage in research that addresses inequitable social structures and systemic racism” (institutional report, page 24) (CFR 1.4).

During the Accreditation Visit, the review team found the institution actively engaged in planning for launching of the new *Social Justice and Racial Equity* cross-cutting thread, while also

continuing to set standards and enhancements, expansion, and improvement for the *Ethics*, *Communications*, and *Global Perspectives* threads. Institutional progress under its self-identified theme of "Building an Integrated and Interdisciplinary Learning Environment" was strongly corroborated by the Accreditation Visit. Although recent milestones were referenced within the institutional report, which was well-organized, clearly written, and substantive, much of the reporting was either aspirational or based on recent curricular changes and enhancements, or changes and enhancements that were mid-stream. Although much depends on the implementation of academic planning currently underway, the review team found that the institutional report was an accurate portrait of PRGS's goal of speaking to concerns raised by faculty and students for better curricular integration. The institution's progress to date has been rigorous, responsive to student insights, and driven by an administrative-faculty partnership. The report provided an effective foundation for the review team's inquiry during the remote Accreditation Visit.

Theme 2: Expanding Experiential Learning (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10)

PRGS has a long history of experiential learning outside the classroom in the form of on-the-job-training (OJT). This practice has been a key component of the program since its inception, and differentiates it from other schools of public policy. PRGS began its redesign in 2015 and sought to answer the questions, "How has the world changed and what does it demand from the school and our graduates? *If we could build a public policy school from the ground up to open in 2030, what would it look like?*" Their vision was developed over workshops and discussions and resulted in a plan for three streams of study (*Research, Analysis, and Design; Community-Partnered Policy and Action; Technology Applications and Implications*), the latter two of which are clearly differentiated in PRGS's discussion of experiential learning within their institutional report. Students in all streams take the same required core courses, which is a positive to ensure that all students achieve a common set of core program outcomes (CFR 2.3). The review team explored the

alignment and communication of these outcomes to students and faculty as part of its interviews, and these discussions often revealed opportunities to strengthen both aspects as the redesign is revised and refined moving forward. The institution's intention is for students within each stream to develop deep experience within their stream, while also building breadth across all streams through collaborative problem-based learning with students in other streams. Students apply, and are admitted to, a specific stream. If appropriate, the institution has been able to support students who wish to change streams early on.

The bootcamp at the beginning of students' educational journey provides the foundation for this type of collaboration, and the faculty stream directors serve as point persons to help facilitate this collaboration.

Students, faculty, and administrators clearly contributed to the development of the streams and their corresponding objectives and plans for assessment (CFR 2.4, 2.5). PRGS also chose four critical skills and perspectives to integrate into the curriculum and serve as interdisciplinary and integrated cross-cutting threads: *Communications, Ethics, Global Perspectives, and Social Justice and Racial Equity*. With the infusion of multiple new elements, the institution may risk embedding unnecessary complexity, yet during the remote Accreditation Visit the students, staff, and faculty demonstrated a common understanding of these elements, their purpose, and the need for consistent and ongoing assessment. These constituents also noted that the assessment infrastructure planning is underway, and it will be necessary to clearly document and implement a plan that integrates existing assessment mechanisms that fit with the redesign with new mechanisms needed for a holistic approach.

PRGS has been piloting the integration of new curriculum design elements since 2017-18, and the first cohort in the new fully-implemented academic stream-based approach began in Fall 2020. The institution has plans to consistently monitor the experience, and during the Accreditation Visit staff, faculty, and students addressed the need to formalize assessment by combining successful past and present approaches with future strategies that consider the reimagined curriculum. It was clear that current approaches include qualitative and quantitative, direct and indirect, and overall varied

assessment.

Quantitative and anecdotal evidence includes written evaluations by faculty to supplement grades and comprehensive exams. As the program grows, it will be valuable to assure that the institution can scale the more time-consuming evaluations that include faculty narratives and student reflections (CFR 2.5, CFR 2.6).

The institution has noted ongoing development work and open issues that will require resolution. This self-assessment of needs is valuable and can serve as a mechanism for evaluation in their planned program review in 2023 and, potentially, in 2026. To the institution's credit, they shared table 3 in their institutional report that provides information about their systematic approach to reviewing and assessing new program elements and identifies responsible parties. Continuous evaluation will be necessary, and the institution has clearly considered, reflected upon, and made plans for re-evaluating the program redesign. They include issues around retention and student success and, in the institutional report appendices, detail issues relevant to data collection and analysis, including the assessment infrastructure, tech portfolio evaluation tool, tech portfolio overview, and student success assessment. During Accreditation Visit discussions about the portfolio approach, the institution shared the desire to add clarity to the learning objectives for the tech portfolio.

In early 2020, PRGS created a formal decision-making process for the introduction of new program elements, but subsequent pandemic-related challenges inspired them to seize the opportunity and adapt their plans for pilot partnerships for the *Community-Partnered Policy and Action* stream. As one informed pivot, they partnered with United Way of Greater Los Angeles (UWGLA) on how to respond to homelessness during the pandemic. Students reported this effort to be a positive experience and various assessment measures were established, including reviews of daily student externship diaries, post-externship self- assessments of student learning with respect to specific outcomes, team reviews of peer performance, outcome assessments by community supervisors, and evaluations of student achievement of outcomes by faculty and/or academic partner supervisors.

This pandemic-related pivot for the tech stream also involved working with the Los Angeles Unified School District to develop an interactive map for students' families to locate support services during the pandemic. Both of these projects, and several other COVID19-related projects undertaken in the spring, reflect the school's approach of "designed for emergence" – deliberately designed to adjust the program as the various elements evolve and/or as the external environment changes. The institutional report and discussions during the remote Accreditation Visit support a positive student experience based upon the infrastructure developed for the redesign. PRGS also noted a plan to move forward with externships in Sitka, Alaska, during the summer of 2020, and the review team confirmed that this occurred and that assessment of the effort was planned. According to the institutional report, thus far the most developed stream is that of *Research, Analysis, and Design*. For all three streams, the institutional report laid out thoughtful and measurable objectives, and PRGS demonstrated an intention to review data and findings in service to continuous improvement. The institution also provided helpful materials to support evidence of their partnerships, including sample MOUs, sample learning agreements, and a sample list of OJT partners (CFR 2.7).

The experiential focus of these themes and the broader program brings into question the sustainability for students to successfully juggle academic coursework with the intense time-investment for these experiences. Students must complete a minimum of 300 days of OJT, and many complete 500-700 days by graduation. The new experiential learning opportunities in the Tech and Narrative Lab and partner communities will count toward OJT requirements. The institution's prior experience with OJT provides confidence that these expanded experiential opportunities will be sustainable, and the staff and faculty expressed a genuine commitment to the processes in place for support, although specific point-of-contacts for specific student support services were not very clear, particularly for international students (CFR 2.10).

Additionally, given that instruction is delivered by researchers who serve as faculty and that they seem to vary in their responsibilities over time, it will be critical to ensure faculty continuity, especially as the

program scales to larger cohort sizes. Faculty reported a relatively stable core faculty who, together with faculty stream leads, currently appear to provide this continuity. Additionally, PRGS's OJT enables students to fund their graduate studies, which also enhances the uniqueness of the program as compared to other schools of public policy. The components of the experiential learning include experience as paid members of RAND research teams, and the opportunity to conduct research is clearly a positive as long as students are able to balance the workload. Interviews with students and faculty indicated that this balance is attained and will be an explicit focus as the redesign evolves. This focus will be particularly important as one aspect of the redesign is expanding OJT beyond the research projects to externships and residencies for the *Community-Partnered Policy and Action* stream as well as projects, experiments, prototyping, Hackathons, and other focused activities in the Tech and Narrative Lab for the *Technology Applications and Implications* stream. The addition of options to augment the RAND project work is commendable and based upon the three streams' lead evaluations of other programs that have similar components, so they are moving forward having completed useful formative research and planning.

The externship plan is in progress yet is important to note that these kinds of community relationships can be challenging and tenuous since organizations and supervisors may come and go. It is commendable that externships planned for April were adjusted quickly in response to the pandemic. Thus, the institution has demonstrated an ability to adapt and prepare for various scenarios as they move forward. PRGS's focus on experiential learning is also commendable since experiential learning has a long history of value for students and is certainly applicable in the area of public policy.

Theme 3: Assessing Students' Core Competencies (CFRs 2.3, 2.7, 2.8, 2.11, 4.1, 4.2)

As a part of the previous mentioned program redesign, PRGS recognized that the traditional summative assessment method for doctoral training (the dissertation) may not be sufficiently robust to assess the full set of student skills, experiences, dispositions, and knowledge that the institution aspired

to produce. In thinking about a way to supplement the dissertation, PRGS researched a summative assessment mechanism, portfolios, that could better capture a more diverse spectrum of student achievement within the newly designed program streams. The institution held meetings with faculty, students, alumni, board members, and school leadership to discuss the program redesign, how it could be improved, and whether new models could augment learning and provide better evidence of mastery.

Portfolios were selected to showcase student's individual creativity and flexibility as well as a breadth and depth of dispositions, capacities, etc. that are difficult to capture through traditional summative assessment like exams. The institution is initially establishing the portfolio assessment tool as part of the Tech academic stream. Once the effectiveness and relevance of this assessment tool is demonstrated and evaluated, the institution will likely implement it in one or both of the Research stream and the Community-Partnered stream. The institution has an assessment infrastructure in development for the Community-Partnered externships and residencies, with initial elements already piloted. The decision to pursue portfolios seems to be a thoughtful and widely supported decision, which will be very important for implementation. While co-curricular activities are not usually a primary focus of graduate programs, it may be prudent in the case of these integrative portfolios to develop a formal mechanism to explicitly capture the work that is happening outside of the classroom, in student organizations, or other community avenues not necessarily affiliated with the courses, faculty, etc. (CFR 2.8).

The institution has explicitly described a portion of the rationale in the creation of the portfolio as a method to identify gaps in what students aim to achieve compared to what they have actually accomplished. This approach could also assist students in choosing courses and targeting experiential learning opportunities to fill in those gaps. There is also a focus on the finished product, what students will produce that will be available to be shared with potential employers upon graduation. The institution has developed a portfolio evaluation tool that will provide meaningful feedback for both students and faculty as to students' progress through the three streams and broader curriculum. While

the institutional report describes the demographics of students in other sections, and provides enrollment/completion data as a part of the report, it is not clear what types of data outside of the portfolio rubric and potential course evaluations will be captured as a part of assessing the core competencies. The review team encourages the institution to consider a more robust catalogue of assessment data. For example, will there be locally developed student surveys or focus groups that capture student satisfaction and student engagement data? Will the informal feedback provided through the individual meetings with faculty be captured, aggregated and reported on for the entire institution? Is there a mechanism being developed in conjunction with the portfolio system that will easily aggregate data on a variety of demographic variables to be shared? What types of data will be shared institutionally from the portfolio regarding student progress (e.g., data that assists in choosing courses, problem courses for students, opportunities for enrichment, etc)? (CFR 2.10)

It is clear that PRGS has led a very collaborative process in developing their three streams and the discussion of portfolios. The institutional report mentions in several sections that PRGS proactively and extensively engaged students, faculty, staff, and administrative offices, board members, and external partners and institutions. PRGS has begun the process of identifying the elements that they would like to analyze in the creation of the portfolio evaluation tool. This tool was created in a collaborative method, and has categories that could be useful across the three streams, though initial focus and piloting is centered on the *Technology Applications and Implications* stream. While the institution has developed a portfolio evaluation tool, it is singular in nature and may not be able to capture all of the intended information desired by the faculty. For example, in discussions about the portfolio projects, the Tech stream faculty explicitly stated that they desired for the student to have “spectacular failures” that would by nature lead to some projects being complete failures or completely redesigned, and that these outcomes are seen as desirable. The use of the existing portfolio evaluation tool may not suffice in providing the intended guiding information to the student such that they are encouraged to have failures. Also, given the layers of the categories included on

the existing evaluation form, PRGS may consider developing singular forms for categories that may require direct and immediate action from the student (e.g., a student recognizing that they have a gap in learning or need to take additional courses to supplement their current understanding of a subject). The review team encourages the institution to further develop concrete outcomes for the portfolio tool, process, and some of the desired skills that students will be developing as a part of this stream. Students should understand while completing the portfolio that their learning from failures and improvements will be documented and reflected upon by both the faculty and the student. The review team also encourages PRGS to consider how the data collected from this tool could be integrated with other student learning data and shared across the institution and utilized for institutional planning processes (CFR 2.3, 4.3).

The institution participates in program review, though this process is being revised. In relation to this theme, the institution has embedded review check-points, including starting with the technology-focused stream as a pilot in 2021, and then conducting a program review in 2023, and again in 2026 or 2027, where they will assess the initial assessment documents/process at that point. The institution has described a collaborative process led by the technology-focused stream lead where they will decide on what additional information is necessary for the portfolio as it is in use. The portfolio review committee consists of a subset of faculty, researchers, and external partners who will mentor students and review the portfolios and will work with students to determine the number, focus, and scope of artifacts. The institution has intentionally not been prescriptive in the portfolio levels/guidelines; however, as this process unfolds it may become necessary to set guidelines on assignment types, number, scope etc. (CFR 4.4).

PRGS acknowledges throughout their institutional report how the current pandemic-impacted reality has impacted their program offerings. In relation to this theme, the institution is currently reviewing the infrastructure for housing portfolio content and considering the ease of use, privacy protections, and cost per student. The institution should also consider the technology required to house the type of projects that they are envisioning (e.g., storage, system capacity for different types of

software output) (CFR 4.7).

Component 9: Reflection and Plans for Improvement

The review team would like to emphasize the rather unique context of the PRGS Accreditation Visit: it was conducted virtually during the COVID pandemic; it was one of the first conducted using the Thematic Pathways for Reaffirmation; and it took place after a six-year, intensive review process through which PRGS's singular doctoral degree was re-imagined and rolled out in full only a few months prior to the Accreditation Visit. This confluence of events could have posed exceptional challenges for the institution and the review team. Instead, it provided a fascinating window into how the co-occurrence of external peer-driven accreditation and internal review and assessment can lead to enhancements in an institution's program.

In Theme One, PRGS reflected upon and recapitulated its efforts to re-examine and strengthen its core program. By focusing on greater integration, the institutions set the foundation for supporting the innovations that are the substance of their overall six-year re-imagining and redesign. This broad overview theme also set the stage for "deeper dives" on more specific components of the redesign through Themes Two and Three. The important work that has been done to strengthen the core also provides PRGS with a solid backdrop in the event that some or all of the individual components of the recently implemented revisions and proposed refinement prove ineffective through forthcoming data-informed assessment efforts. It would be a useful exercise for their faculty to think through which components could stand alone and which are highly interdependent. While a formal program review process is planned for a few years after this TPR-based review, the review team encourages the institution to remain nimble should aspects of the new streams and themes not work in expected or optimal ways.

In Theme Two, PGRS reviewed and built upon its deep history and engagement in experiential learning. They re-envisioned their experiential learning to complement and coordinate with the three streams, while also adapting to the emerging pandemic challenges, thereby demonstrating an ability to

be nimble and pilot partnerships within this difficult climate. The institution will benefit from creating clear and consistent assessment processes for their reimagined experiential learning and from ensuring clear and frequent communication about the processes, assessment results, and analysis and plans for evidence-based continuous improvement.

In Theme Three, PRGS reflects and reports on its efforts and plans to initially establish in the Tech stream and potentially more broadly apply the use of student portfolios. While portfolios are far from an innovative approach in and of themselves, this approach has great potential as a heuristic for individual students as well as the program and its faculty. Thus, PRGS has an opportunity to lead in innovative program assessment and review and thereby challenge their entire field to think differently about what someone needs today as well as in the future to be an effective policy analyst. This is exciting and truly has the potential to move both “assessment of learning” and “assessment for learning” in a new more synergistic direction. *How would one know, for example, as one of the faculty asked during our visit, whether a student had achieved an innovative mindset? How might one assess the value of making mistakes and even failing in some of their endeavors?* While Theme Three focused attention on portfolios as a mechanism for capturing innovative learning, this may represent an innovative approach within a broader assessment framework that has yet to be fully implemented and sustained in service to the redesigned curriculum. *How will PRGS ensure that the current assessment practices capture information that is documented and shared across the institution and eventually utilized in decision making at the institution? How will PRGS capture information that can be aggregated up to the program level to allow for meaningful program review in a few years from now?* The institution may benefit from expert assistance and professional development in supporting the process of translating their creative thinking into a fully operationalized and widely understood assessment framework.

SECTION III – OTHER TOPICS (such as Substantive Change)

Not Applicable

SECTION IV – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The review team commends the Pardee RAND Graduate School for:

1. Engaging in a thoughtful, inclusive six-year planning process to reimagine their entire program with the desire to enhance the students' learning experience and promote their success as they aspire to change the nature of the field of policy analysis.
2. The institution's efforts to "design for emergence" by building in an ability to respond to future policy education and practice needs through feedback mechanisms at multiple organizational levels (board, leadership, faculty, students)
3. The tenacity, commitment, and ability to implement this redesign and expand their student cohort during a major pandemic.
4. Retaining its well-established Ph.D. in Policy Analysis while recognizing the value of allowing students to bring in and further develop, different dispositions to bring to bear on policy work in the creation of their three new streams of study and action. The review team especially commends the establishment of the Boot Camp for all entering students.
5. Incorporating a strong spirit of collaboration among faculty, staff, and students, and their commitment to maintain this collaboration as the institution grows in size and complexity.
6. Developing the *Social Justice and Racial Equity* cross-cutting thread and their expanded engagement with diverse community partners (Sitka, Alaska and City of Los Angeles).

The review team recommends the Pardee RAND Graduate School:

1. As the assessment program progresses, PRGS has an opportunity to lead in innovative program review and assessment. As such, the institution must further strengthen and articulate broad assessment infrastructure in ways that institutionalize the process to ensure sustainability by: (CFR 2.3, 2.4, 2.7, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3.)

- a. developing and documenting an institutionally understood and accepted assessment methodology and structure;
 - b. ensuring that program learning objectives and course structures are widely shared among students, faculty, and the broader community.
2. Align curricular and co-curricular components to meet learning objectives of the redesigned program. (CFR 2.11)
3. Clearly articulate desired learning outcomes for the Tech Stream Portfolio and ensure that those outcomes are distributed and known amongst the students, faculty, and broader community. (CFR 2.3, 2.4, 2.7)
4. Strengthen resources and opportunities for faculty development that are grounded in pedagogical best-practices, focused on the program outcomes, and responsive to the academic and professional needs of a diverse and growing student body. (CFRs 2.8, 3.3)
5. Strengthen a coordinated approach to student success and well-being that promotes equity and success for all students, with particular attention to the needs of underrepresented and international students. (CFRs 2.10, 2.13)
6. As the reimagined program scales, the institution embraces a sustainable approach to: (CFRs 3.1, 3.2)
 - a. articulating clear roles and responsibilities for staff and administrators in order to strengthen and sustain institutional communication and capacity as well as student success;
 - b. identifying specific points-of-contact for specific issues, questions, etc. such that students, faculty, community partners, and other stakeholders are better served.

APPENDICES

A. Federal Compliance Forms

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? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, where is the policy located? The policy on credit hours can be found on page 24 of the 2020-21 Student Handbook
	Comments:
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)? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: PRGS reviews credit hours for courses on a quarterly basis through course evaluations, which include questions on the amount of time spent on work done outside of the classroom.
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: Course schedules with class times are displayed in the Populi, PRGS's student course scheduling and records management program
Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses	How many syllabi were reviewed? Three
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? Online given COVID pandemic
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Public Policy Analysis, with specific course topics of Policy Analysis I, Statistics for Policy Analysis II, and Resilience, Reliability, and Response in Complex Systems: Lessons from Disaster Risk Management
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: Note that these courses are traditional conducted in a face-to-face modality, but as with many institutions shifted to online modality given the broader pandemic
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? Two
	What kinds of courses? Independent Study (Fertility and Household Formation, Value-Added Modeling)
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Public Policy Analysis
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:

Sample program information (catalog, website, or other program materials)	How many programs were reviewed? One
	What kinds of programs were reviewed? PRGS has a single program in the form of a combined Master of Philosophy in Policy Analysis and Ph.D. in
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Public Policy Analysis
	Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:

Review Completed By: Stephen Schellenberg, Assistant Chair

Date: October 19, 2020

2 - MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT REVIEW FORM

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? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: PRGS does not provide any commission, bonus, or other incentive payment based directly or indirectly on success in securing enrollments or financial aid to any persons or entities engaged in any student recruiting or admission activities or in making decisions regarding the award of student financial assistance.
Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: Information on typical length of time to degree is available at: https://www.prgs.edu/degree-program/success-data/time-to-completion.html Information on the overall cost of the degree is available at: https://www.prgs.edu/admissions/funding-your-phd.html
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: Information on jobs for which graduates are qualified and employment of graduates is available at: https://www.prgs.edu/careers/alumni-careers.html

*§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: Stephen Schellenberg, Assistant Chair
Date: October 19, 2020

3

- STUDENT COMPLAINTS REVIEW FORM

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? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Is so, where? Students may bring complaints to the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (https://www.prgs.edu/about/institution-complaint-process.html) and PRGS’s internal policy is presented on pages 77-83 of the 2019-20 Student Handbook.
	Comments:
Process(es)/ procedure	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, please describe briefly:
	The PRGS student grievance policy and associated procedure is outlined for students and the broader school community on pages 77-83 of the 2019-20 Student Handbook.
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Records	Comments: Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where?
	Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, please describe briefly: The PRGS student grievance policy states that records of all student complaints are kept for three years within administrative files (see page 83 of the 2019-2020 Student Handbook).
	Comments:

*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission’s Complaints and Third Party Comment Policy.

Review Completed By: Stephen Schellenberg, Assistant Chair

Date: October 19, 2020

– TRANSFER CREDIT POLICY REVIEW FORM

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? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, is the policy publicly available? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where?
	The Pardee RAND Graduate School's policy on transfer credits is available https://www.prgs.edu/admissions/faqs.html#faq7
	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? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> 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: Stephen Schellenberg, Assistant Chair

Date: October 19, 2020

B. Off-Campus Locations Review - Not Applicable

C. Distance Education Review - Not Applicable