



Report of the WASC Visiting Team Capacity and Preparatory Review to Naval Postgraduate School, March 11 - 13, 2009 In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Reaffirmation of Accreditation, Final Report

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FINAL REPORT

**REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM
CAPACITY AND PREPARATORY REVIEW
TO NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

March 11 – 13, 2009

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Reaffirmation of Accreditation**

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The evaluation team in conducting its review was able to evaluate the institution under the WASC Commission Standards and the Core Commitment for Institutional Capacity and therefore submits this Report to the Accrediting commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for Action and to the institution for consideration.

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SECTION I. – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of Institution and Visit

The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), considered the research university of the Navy, is an institution dedicated to providing relevant education and research to the defense and security arenas, recognizing and solving problems in support of U.S. military forces, global partners and national security. The institution has a long and distinguished history, and in the coming year will celebrate its centennial anniversary. While many civilian universities provide graduate education, few are dedicated to providing substantial national security related graduate educational programs for military officers, as well as federal, state and local government civilian employees and contractors. The Naval Postgraduate School is such a place.

At NPS, four graduate schools oversee 14 academic departments supporting more than 42 master's and 19 doctoral degree programs. In addition to 1,600 resident students, including more than 200 international students, NPS serves approximately 700 distributed learning students worldwide. Approximately 200-300 students pursue post-baccalaureate certificates. Four institutes, multiple secure research facilities and 26 Centers of Excellence add to the wealth of intellectual resources. NPS delivers non-resident courses to students through online, web-enabled, video-tele-education (VTE) systems and/or by visiting faculty. Continuous learning, refresher and transitional educational opportunities abound. NPS also offers short-term, executive education courses and a variety of short courses in Monterey, throughout the U.S., and abroad.

Students in residence at NPS are typically officers in one of the armed forces of the United States or civilian employees of the Department of Defense. Additionally, a substantial international student population includes military officers and defense civilians. Civilian personnel from state and local government organizations are also educated through the distributed learning programs.

The NPS faculty is comprised of approximately 600 scholars and professionals, 10 percent of whom are military officers and half of whom are either tenured or tenure-track faculty. To strengthen expertise and program relevance, and to expedite research successes at NPS, a robust mix of tenured faculty, research faculty, lecturers and visiting professionals integrate teaching with research, demonstrating the immediate applicability of scholarly solutions to defense-related problems.

Approximately 400 staff members, directly employed by NPS, provide support for both the academic and administrative functions of the School. This workforce is supplemented by contractors and other Department of Defense employees. Staff provides a wealth of functions ranging from office, budget and purchasing to laboratory assistance to maintenance to counseling, registration and student services.

The NPS Board of Advisors, an 18-member federal advisory committee, provides guidance and reports to the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps on matters pertaining to NPS and its graduate educational and research programs.

The CPR visit took place March 11 – 13, 2009. During the visit the university community from the Board of Advisors to the President, Provost, Dean, faculty, staff and students with whom the team interacted were welcoming and accommodating of the needs of the visiting team. The campus community was well-informed of the presence of the team and the purpose of the visit, and there was widespread interest in it. Members of the team met formally and informally with many different groups and individuals, most of whom are identified below. Documents supporting the CPR report were provided to the team electronically before the visit, and many more were available to the team during the visit. In addition, the School provided detailed information packets for every scheduled meeting during the visit.

Recent Accreditation History

The Naval Postgraduate School hosted its last WASC accreditation visit in February 1999. The WASC Commission subsequently reaffirmed the accreditation of the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) and asked NPS to consider a number of important recommendations, which are discussed in Section C below. In 2004, WASC also approved a system subchange proposal, allowing the School to continue to mount a number of online degree programs, consistent with its mission. In 2007, WASC approved a subchange proposal for an off-campus program in Homeland Security

The Capacity and Preparatory Review Report: Alignment with the Proposal and Quality and Rigor of the Review and Report

1. Description of Intended Outcomes and Approach

NPS stated in its institutional proposal that during the CPR it would demonstrate the foundation of resources and infrastructure that undergird academic and educational activities as identified by the WASC Standards. Specifically, the CPR focuses on issues deemed in need of special attention. Those areas include:

- Working to ensure that their process for continuous improvement is in place and effective (Standard 4).
- Ensuring that faculty participate in development programs and design curricula that meet the stated learning objectives (Standards 1 and 2).
- Developing an institutional portfolio, which tracks various data sets related to student success (Standard 4).
- Evaluating the progress of academic program reviews (Standard 2).
- Documenting and evaluating how requirements have changed as the institution has grown in levels of instruction and research (Standard 3).
- Identifying staffing requirements, business, and infrastructure (Standard 3).
- Documenting the current organizational structure and decision-making processes (Standard 3).

- Documenting evidence regarding how the strategic planning is used at multiple levels of administration to determine budgetary allocations (Standard 4).

Each of these issues will be addressed below within the sections that respond to the three themes for this reaccreditation review. Those themes are:

- a. Strategic planning for the next NPS centennial
- b. Integrating a campus-wide program of continuous improvement
- c. Supporting an evolving academic enterprise

2. Description of overall quality of the CPR Report and its value in the review process.

The NPS Capacity and Preparatory Report was well organized and clearly written and presented. Documentation regarding their response to the previous WASC Commission report and the required data elements were included in a separate document of appendices. In addition, a lengthy set of evidence was provided on an accompanying CD with references to the documents noted throughout the text of the CPR report.

The CPR documents reflect an institution in the process of considerable change with regard to its traditional curricular focus on applied programs and with regard to the infrastructure for ensuring continuous improvement. While it is clear that the institution has showed considerable concern for institutional learning, the document was unclear with regard to the level of involvement in the WASC process of all constituency groups in the university community. Furthermore, the data and evidence provided in the report indicate an institution which is beyond the point of clearly defining the steps to be taken for strategic planning and quality assurance, but one that has not yet fully implemented the full set of structures that will be necessary for achieving that vision. The meetings and conversations during the visit focused on these areas of concern.

B. Response to Previous Commission Issues

In its last WASC accreditation review (February 1999), the WASC Commission reaffirmed the institution noting four recommendations in the areas of: (1) inclusiveness and diversity; (2) program assessment and educational effectiveness; (3) Technology and learning resources; and (4) planning, the curriculum, and the quality of instruction.

1. Inclusiveness and Diversity

In this first area, the CPR report notes that from 2001 to 2007, the faculty increased from 397 to 589 members. During that same period, female faculty members increased from 11.6% to 18.2%. In addition, the percentage of ethnic minority faculty increased from 9.1% to 10.5%.

A campus climate survey and results during the 2007-2008 AY showed responses that were higher and more positive than overall Navy averages. These surveys investigated perceptions of equality of treatment in the workplace; organizational commitment to diversity and inclusiveness; trust in the organization; job satisfaction; and work group cohesion.

2. Program assessment and educational effectiveness

The CPR report states that NPS has expanded its efforts in program review and assessment through two external review processes. One effort involves the external review of curricula through which each curriculum is assessed and revised during a two year cycle. The other effort involved establishing a formal program review of Academic Programs, which focuses on the quality and capacity of each academic program. The program review process is organized on a 6 year cycle with 4 departments undergoing review in 2008, and 3 reviews planned for 2009.

3. Technology and resources

During the past five years, NPS has hired a senior administrator to oversee information resources, created a campus-wide advisory committee and developed a five-year IT Strategic Plan. Some of the accomplishment of the institution over the past five years with regard to this recommendation include:

- Upgrades from the older ATM technology
- A transition from the .mil domain to the .edu domain
- Development of a technology assistance center
- Expansion of the academic applications and services to coordinate and leverage investments in software applications.
- Establishment of a classroom inventory and life cycle management plan
- Establishment of a physical infrastructure linking all of the DoD organizations in the region
- Development of a new student information system
- Development of a monthly newsletter that highlights new developments in IT
- Establishment of a high performance computing group to support HPC activities
- Greater support of the IT involved with distance education
- Expansion of visualization capabilities such as videoconferencing and high definition projection
- Expansion of support for individual faculty projects, academic departments, and multidisciplinary institutes.
- Development of a Navy Higher Education IT Consortium
- Greatly expanded IT support of library collections

4. Planning the curriculum and the quality of instruction

NPS has embarked on three major initiatives in response to this recommendation. With regard to university planning, the School has developed an on-going planning process at the levels of strategic planning, programming, academic planning, school/department planning, and faculty activities planning. With regard to institutional review and assessment processes, NPS has implemented a variety of indirect measures of student satisfaction and performance, faculty activities, and program curriculum revision. With regard to planning groups, NPS has developed a system of operation planning through the Strategic Planning Council, the Executive Council,

the Provost's Council, the Deans and Chairs, the Resource Advisory Board, the Faculty Council, the Academic Council, and the Research Board.

Many of these initiatives are explained in greater detail in the sections below.

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY UNDER THE STANDARDS

The CPR report responded to each of the WASC Standards in turn. With regard to Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives, the School highlighted its purpose in supporting defense and national security, its commitment to academic freedom, and its academic committee structure (CFR 1.1, 1.2, 1.4). As noted above, the 1999 WASC review noted the lack of diversity in faculty, students, and staff diversity and inclusion. In an effort to pursue this issue beyond the reported activities in the CPR report, the WASC team discussed the diversity issue with many groups and individuals.

In the team meeting with the Advisory Board, the team learned that the Navy has set targets for diversity, and over time, these targets will increase NPS's student diversity consistent with those targets (1.4). Those measures include investing in K-12 marketing and generating interest from all groups early on. The Navy has set a goal of reaching parity in ethnic distribution with the general diversity of the U.S. population within 25 years. In addition, students uniformly reported on a positive campus climate. Female students unanimously reported positive experiences, and less prepared students expressed appreciation from more proficient classmates. As one student stated, "Just as we won't leave a soldier on the field, we also won't leave a classmate without assistance in the classroom."

The CPR report addresses a number of initiatives that fall under Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions. The report notes the dual review process of a two year curricular review cycle in addition to a 6 year cycle of program review (2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7). With regard to scholarship and creative activities, the report notes the extensive applied research activities, which are largely funded by the DoD as well as NPS, Lawrence Livermore and a number of other funding agencies. In addition, new faculty are supported by the Research Initiation Program (RIP), which provides funding for release time, equipment, supplies and travel (2.8, 2.9). The document notes support for student research through the Research and Sponsored Programs Office, the International Graduate Program Office (IGPO) and the Office of Student Services.

The School monitors services for students through the Graduating Student survey. Additionally, instruments which will be implemented in the '08-'09 AY include the New Student Survey and the Mid-term Student Survey. The School provides students with an exceptionally well-developed IT environment which includes 800 software packages, 18 Learning Resource Centers, 7 conference rooms, 10 scheduled labs, 6 library collaboration spaces and 5 large venue facilities. Approximately 120 hours of instructional content per week is captured and made available to students on demand. The School maintains internet access through Cal-REN to ensure state-of-the-art linkages with resources around the world (2.10, 2.13).

With regard to Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Sustainability, the School learned through its investigation of the need for stronger orientation programs, more training opportunities, better communications with regard to advancement opportunities and funding for training (3.3, 3.4). These issues will be addressed in Theme 2. The Standard 3 review also discusses fundamental changes in the budgeting process and reorganization of decision-making structures. These changes will be addressed under Theme 3 (3.5).

Under Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement, the CPR report outlines the development of the new strategic plan and its metrics with regard to strategic thinking and planning (4.1, 4.2, 4.3). In addition, it mentions the introduction of the newly developed program review process. These issues will be addressed under Theme 3 (4.6, 4.7, 4.8).

Theme 1: Strategic Planning for the Next Century

Materials Reviewed: Capacity and Preparatory Review & Appendices, Strategic Plan-2008: Vision for a New Century, NPS Planning Process (document prepared for WASC CPR Meeting: Thursday 9:30, CNO Establishes Advance Education Review Board, Approves Installation Status for NPS (*In Review*, January 2009, pp 12-13), Barriers to Success (7/06), 1999 WASC Report.

Interviews: WASC Steering Committee, Board of Advisors, President, Provost, Deans, Faculty Council Executive Board, Chief of Staff, Dean of Students, Military Associate Deans, Base Director, Director, Human Resources, Vice President for Information Resources and Chief Information Officer, Director of Institutional Planning and Communications, Director of Academic Planning, Executive Director, Business Affairs and Comptroller, Vice Provost, Academic Affairs, Executive Director, National Security Institute, Director, Research and Sponsored Programs Office, students and faculty presenting research projects, an open session that drew approximately 50 faculty and staff members from across campus.

The CPR report lays out in great detail how the strategic plan was developed, who was involved in the development and how the schools have aligned their own plans with the institutional strategic plan. This section also discusses the development of a new communications model, as well as the revised budgeting process that aligns resource allocation with the strategic plan (4.1, 4.2).

Process for Strategic Planning, Change Management and Implementation

The institution's mission statement is appropriate for an institution of higher education. Its planning process are as described in the CPR Report (CFR 1.1, 1.6).

As a federal university sponsored by the U.S. Navy, the strategic direction of the institution is defined by a complex set of conversation among the institution's stakeholders. The President and Provost act as a bridge between the NPS faculty/staff and the Secretary of the Navy (3.10) in bringing the Navy's workforce development needs and the faculty's understanding of how to

best address those needs into a single document that provides a robust framework for institutional planning. While the process of the planning development differs in many respects from that found in civilian universities, the principles of broad consultation and inclusion, the development of mission driven priorities that reflect an accurate understanding of the strategic context, a focus on the development of infrastructure and processes that support student learning and a commitment to continuous improvement reflect the best practices in higher education (4.3, 4.6). The resulting strategic plan is widely understood and endorsed by all stakeholders. (CFR 1.2, 4.1)

The University is now engaged in a process that will align unit level strategic plans with the overall NPS plan. The commitment to this process is solid and consistent throughout the institution. Nonetheless, as a work in progress, the alignment of unit-level plans with the NPS plan is not complete. The alignment of budgeting and planning processes is also changing towards a more integrated model as is institution-wide research planning to support the University's objective of becoming a world-class research university with a focus on national security.

The institutional research capability to support comprehensive, integrated planning and budgeting is being developed. Leadership positions have been staffed, task forces are defining outcome measures, peer institutions for benchmarking are being identified and the data warehouse and reporting infrastructures are taking shape. All of this capacity is aligned with the objectives of the strategic plan and supported by NPS budgeting priorities. (CFR 4.3, 4.5)

The creation of an Advanced Education Review Board (AERB) that brings together the senior Navy leaders who fund NPS twice a year has repositioned NPS in Navy planning and budgeting processes with the result that fiscal, physical and technological program needs of the University are more likely to be addressed in a way that supports the strategic objectives and priorities of the institution (CFR 4.2).

The institution has demonstrated extraordinary capability to respond to changes in the external environment that affected how the institution achieves its mission. For example, following 9/11 and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security demands for whole new programs of study emerged. NPS was able to take apart the requests for new programs in order to analyze faculty staffing, curriculum, partnership and resource needs and create new programs that put the institution in a global leadership position in relation to new threats to national security. (CFR 1.6, 4.2, 4.3, 4.1)

While the newly formed Strategic Planning Council has been charged with monitoring and oversight of the processes for alignment and implementation of the NPS plan, this effort is just beginning. Budgeting for mission funding is being rationalized and is becoming more transparent. Budgeting for activities funded by reimbursable programming is still distributed and the planning for these activities is essentially managed by the school deans who are accountable for the alignment of activities with the NPS plan. (CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)

Communication and Alignment

The 2006 SWOT analysis revealed a need for building improved relationships with constituents, stakeholders, industry, and civilian universities. The institution responded by creating the Office of Institutional Advancement, under the direction of the Director of Institutional Planning and Communications who, in turn, reports to the Vice President for Information Resources & CIO. This unit published a Strategic Plan in 2008 with an ambitious agenda for improving communications and relationships with alumni and the regional community. Other goals specified increasing visibility through improved media relations and marketing. By the end of FY 2008, the “Annual Accountability Report” listed progress in web-based communications and increased print communications and publications (4.8).

These efforts are in the early stages of development with many opportunities to advance the institution still available. The commitment of the administration to advancing the reputation and visibility of NPS will be enhanced by a commensurate commitment to stronger and enhanced investments in developing constituent relations and marketing. The opportunity exists for benchmarking the effectiveness of advancement efforts in order to justify the importance of supporting a professional and well-resourced advancement function within the university (4.1, 4.2).

Recommendations:

The planning infrastructure and processes that have been put in place are consistent with WASC expectations. NPS should complete its planned implementation of its processes and then review the effectiveness of those processes as instruments for the achievement of its mission.

The development of a measurement system with clear performance goals that are benchmarked against aspirational peers will be essential to support progress towards the realization of the broad goals outlined in the strategic plan.

In order to achieve widespread recognition of existing excellence at NPS and the achievements to come a strong university communications program is essential. A strong “brand identity” will be an asset in gaining grant funding and opening doors to partnerships that will strengthen educational programming at NPS. The University should continue its nascent advancement initiatives in order to preserve the institution’s reputation and to ensure its continued success.

Theme 2: Integrating a Campus-Wide Program of Improvement

Materials Reviewed:

The materials reviewed under this theme include the CPR self study, the Report of the Learning Assessment Task Force, documents describing the Program Review process, the Curriculum Review process, and student surveys. In addition we received a document on Academic Policies that summarized assessment efforts. Finally, we also were able to see posters of student research, presented by the student researchers.

Interviews:

Our interviews included academic leadership at the Provost, Academic Dean and Department Chair levels, various Student Services and Academic Affairs staff, Distributed Learning faculty and administrators, faculty and staff in academic departments, and students from various departments.

From the NPS CPR Report:

The four primary goals in *Vision for a New Century*, upon which NPS will focus its primary efforts are to:

- sustain continuous improvement in the quality and relevance of NPS education and research programs
- extend NPS educational opportunities to the total force and our global partners
- broaden research in the areas of national security
- streamline and optimize business practices and procedures

These goals reflect NPS's commitment to integrating a campus-wide program of continuous improvement. Because these goals relate directly to the academic enterprise, specific processes that support the NPS academic system — Program Review, Assessment, and Faculty Development — will be examined.

Academic Review

NPS makes a distinction between assessment and accountability toward their program sponsors (e.g., the Navy, Army, governmental organizations) and the higher education academic community. The former is captured through the Curriculum Review process, and the latter through the Program Review process. Each of the degree programs at NPS has its own curriculum. In addition, sponsors such as the Army, Air Force, or other entities may ask NPS to create a special concentration which will include the defined degree curriculum and additional courses. The NPS defines “curriculum” as the set of Educational Skills Requirements (ESRs) that define a sponsored concentration above and beyond basic degree requirements. The term ESR maps fairly directly to ‘student learning outcomes.’ The evaluation of ESR's is an important part of the sponsors' reviews of curricula, and hence is a valuable aspect of NPS's assessment. Degree requirements are the academic requirements that don't tend to change much over time (2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6).

Of special merit is the requirement that every MS degree include a thesis or a comparable final project. The student must submit a thesis proposal typically three quarters before graduation, and this is reviewed and acted upon. Thesis work then continues until graduation, with the average thesis being around 60 to 70 pages. All theses are posted on the web, subject to security restrictions. Supervising and evaluating theses require a great effort by the faculty. In particular, since research projects may last a number of years, faculty must learn to ‘packetize’ the work of a project so that a new student can come up to speed on an existing project and make an original contribution within the time constraints of a student's tour of duty (2.1, 2.2, 2.8, 2.9). During the visit, the team had the opportunity to review a number of student research project at the poster session during the reception. The team was impressed by the depth and breadth of research represented and the students' ability to explain their projects and the applications of their research.

The Curriculum Review process is a nearly continuous cycle of data collection, analysis, and change, based on the needs of the program sponsors. The reviews are on a two-year cycle, with preparation for the visit lasting 12 months, leaving another 12 months for implementation of recommendations before the process begins again. This relatively rapid cycle seems to reflect the changing nature of the fields represented, especially with regard to the application of research and technology in the fields of interest. The Academic Associate representing each curriculum is responsible for collecting the relevant data, which includes exit interviews, survey results, and course content statements (2.3, 2.4, 2.6). This results in a self-study that reflects the sponsor's stated needs, accompanied by an action plan. It appears that the programs use this process to remain very responsive to the sponsoring agencies. The aspect of data collection that appears to be not as prevalent in this review is that of direct measures of student learning. Almost all measures are indirect, either through alumni surveys that report what alumni would have liked to learn, or tracking promotion rates of graduates in comparison to the average, for example.

The Program Review process is undertaken at about a six-year cycle per program. This process investigates all academic aspects of the degree programs, including scholarship of the faculty, curriculum, capacity, resource allocation, and strategic direction. This review includes the participation of external academicians in peer review, for example faculty from peer or otherwise respected institutions. This process is owned by the chair of the department. In a few departments, most particularly the departments that are externally accredited (such as business and engineering), assurances of student learning are incorporated into these analyses. To site some additional examples: The business program has begun a 'matrixing,' or curriculum mapping, process that will allow them to assess learning across many courses independent of individual student achievement. All departments assess theses. The Electrical Engineering Department is thought to be doing a particularly good job at reviewing student thesis work, and other departments (e.g. Mechanical Engineering) may look to modify their process to incorporate the best practices of their colleagues. Direct measures of student learning may be happening in a few other areas of the institution, but might not be documented in as rigorous a fashion as for the externally accredited programs.

The team found evidence of the collection and analysis of student learning in a number of places around campus. For example, every department chair we spoke to reported reading *every* thesis in their department. Some reported a formal evaluation of each using a rubric and subsequent analyses according to advisor, or mode of instruction, etc., while others reported reading them and drawing ad hoc conclusions. Another example is the Systems Engineering chair, who teaches a course both in residence and in the Distributed (distance) Learning curriculum, and compares the achievement on assignments between those two delivery modes and makes changes accordingly (2.3). These efforts, while spread across the curriculum in a number of places, have not been required by university policy or documented. The institution needs to clarify by policy both the direct and indirect measures of student learning that all departments will be responsible for collecting and analyzing. Furthermore, the institution also needs to require that program review self-studies include an analysis of student learning over time. It is through such a comprehensive, systematic examination of student learning that continuous programmatic change can take place.

Faculty Development

The unusual nature of the institution, with its mission to support national security and its demand driven curricula from military sponsors, correspondingly requires an unusual faculty with a commitment to each of these aspects. There are many challenges (remediation, supervising theses, bi-annual curricular reviews) but also many rewards (a highly motivated student body, excellent research facilities, IT support). As NPS has sought greater visibility as a research university it has paid additional attention to faculty development.

One of the biggest changes is in how faculty salaries are paid. Until recently faculty received salary from NPS principally for those periods of time when they would be performing their instructional activities. For most tenure-track faculty this would result in salary on a six-month basis with the requirement to raise the remainder via funded research. The concern was that faculty were thus more constrained to pursue only currently funded projects and would not have the flexibility to move readily in new directions. NPS now provides nine months of salary, much as other research universities. This has been a very welcome change, especially for junior faculty (3.3, 3.4).

In general, retention and recruiting issues do not seem so different from other universities of a generally similar type, though the question of the right 'fit' to the mission of NPS is particularly important. Salaries are competitive at the junior level, but recruiting at the senior level is more difficult, because there are congressionally mandated caps on salaries. There is a program of 'Distinguished Faculty' all of whom receive a retention incentive. The cost of housing in Monterey can also be a problem. The demographics of the faculty is of some concern, and efforts at diversifying the faculty should continue as reflecting the increased diversity of the armed services (3.1, 3.2).

There are other aspects that one would recognize as standard at a distinguished university. The sabbatical policy, for example, follows the common pattern of a sabbatical every seven years with full funding for a half-year and half-funding for a full year.

The NPS has started an organization called PETAL, Promoting Excellence in Teaching to Advance Learning, specifically to encourage the scholarship of teaching and build a community of scholars with like interests in pedagogy, student learning and assessment. There has been notable interest in this (3.4).

Recommendations:

- The School should continue the collection of student learning evidence where it is happening already, and bring remaining departments along in the development of those processes.
- NPS should establish a program of documenting these efforts, such that appropriate results can be folded into the various review processes seamlessly rather than reinvented at each juncture.

- The institution should consider what evidence could be used across most or all review processes (e.g., external program accreditation, curriculum review, program review, WASC review) and document that evidence in such a way that it is accessible.

Theme 3: Supporting an Evolving Academic Enterprise

Materials Reviewed: Capacity and Preparatory Review & Appendices, NPS Planning Process, Strategic Plan 2008.

Interviews: Director of Facilities and Base Operations; Comptroller, Human Resources; Director, EEO Manager; Director, Academic Planning; Vice President and Dean of Research; Vice Provost Academic Affairs; Vice President for Information Resources and CIO; University Librarian; Executive Director, Information Technology and Communications Services; Director, Research and Sponsored Programs; Executive Director, Business Affairs and Comptroller; Professor and Chair of Information Science Department.

Discussion

NPS has seen significant change during the last 5 to 8 years, driven initially by the BRAC process in early 2000 and questions regarding the cost effectiveness of its operations. NPS emerged with a more clearly defined mission and the development of a clearly articulated, and accepted academic strategic vision which enabled the institution to reorganize its academic infrastructure that now has 4 schools and 4 research institutes.

The rate of change has been quick and has been accompanied by growth in all areas of the organization, especially faculty and students, and in reimbursable activities. Theme 3 addresses the question of supporting an evolving academic enterprise.

While Theme 3 focuses on processes and structures, it must also take into account Standard 3 which focuses on 1) the investment in human, physical, fiscal, and information resources and 2) on determining whether there is an appropriate and effective set of organizational and decision-making structures to ensure sustainability.

The strategic vision for NPS represents a nontrivial shift from an institution focused on teaching to a vision that also includes research. The approval of the strategic vision (which kicked off a motivated effort to define and clearly articulate decision making structures, to implement modern cost-effective business processes, and the use of data) was marked by the appointment of NPS' first civilian president (1.1, 4.1).

The impact of this change manifests itself in stability and engaged leadership that has made governance – clarity about reporting relationships and responsibilities up and down the chain – a high priority (3.10). The successful designation of NPS as an installation is one tangible outcome and translates into a funding model equivalent to that of the Naval War College and the U.S. Naval Academy, two institutions that have historically been better resourced. These are changes that potentially translate into greater financial stability and predictability (3.5).

NPS has taken some beginning steps towards realizing their strategic vision. The School engaged a series of outside consultants to advise them in myriad areas and as a result has implemented a number of changes:

- NPS has reorganized internally and has created a series of specific committees to support decision making (3.8). A new Vice President of Finance and Administration, reporting directly to the president, will soon be appointed (3.10) to coordinate financial, budgetary and other related activities of the administration. While still in-progress, NPS is seeking to ensure that their decision making and budgetary decisions are accessible and transparent.
- The School undertook a detailed review of transactional processes (accounting, travel and purchasing) and developed a series of recommendations to improve. As a result, NPS is actively evaluating and pursuing the use of the Quali Financial System to improve internal financial management. Transition to this financial system should lead to greater transparency of data (3.6, 3.7).
- NPS identified a number of comparison institutions and conducted a peer analysis on several fronts. At the same time, NPS identified a specific set of metrics associated with each of the 4 goals in its strategic vision and developed trend data (4.5). This is an impressive start and can yield valuable benchmarks.

NPS states that its strength is in its faculty, and places a high priority on recruitment and retention of high quality faculty. NPS has an instructional staffing plan that takes into consideration its unique mission and needs of its students (3.2). Students coming to NPS may be coming to pursue their graduate education after a hiatus that could be as long as 10 years; thus, requiring remedial/refresher course work, especially in mathematics. Much of this teaching load is handled by lecturers and does not seem to compete with the research objectives of NPS (2.12, 2.13). Among the actions taken to (3.4) support faculty, in alignment with their vision, include:

- Transitioning to a 9-month funding model for faculty, effective this academic year.
- Providing two years of support for new tenure track faculty.
- Providing competitive salaries at the assistant and associate levels.

NPS enjoys an engaged Board of Advisors, who report to the Secretary of the Navy, and define their role as 1) providing advice to the NPS President; 2) providing independent oversight for NPS; 3) being a conduit to other training and academic institutions; and 4) acting on behalf of NPS (3.9).

NPS appears to have the resources to fulfill its mission; in fact, it appears to have moved to greater financial stability and alignment of resources with the mission (3.5). NPS realizes annual revenues of approximately ~\$330M. Of this ~\$100M is mission direct funding in support of the core I&R mission and administrative activities. The remaining funds are realized through a combination of sponsored research, revenue from other agencies and/or governments that

provide support for their students who attend NPS, and congressional appropriations. Over the last 5+ years, the proportional ratio has changed significantly, providing NPS with a degree of flexibility and stability. With the implementation of a new financial system, NPS may position itself to capture the data needed to generate additional overhead.

Today the NPS budget supports over 1,120 staff and faculty, representing growth of nearly 50% in the last 5 years (3.1, 3.2). During this time, the Staff Development Advisory Committee conducted a comprehensive survey of staff, resulting in a series of recommendations that are currently under discussion and not yet institutionalized.

Similar to how many of the support operations work, the HR function is regionalized. In essence, most of what can be considered as back office functions reside in San Diego. NPS adheres to clearly articulated recruitment, orientation, workload and evaluation practices (3.3). On the academic HR side, faculty appointments are made expeditiously through the academic planning office. HR is delegated authority to deal with J-1 visas (for the designated visitors program) and contract with private attorneys to handle H-1B visas. The inclusion of international faculty appears to have added depth and breadth to the human resources capacity of the institution.

Along with its internal restructuring, NPS moved to a funding model in which many support functions were regionalized and which are now funded outside of the NPS budget. These include facilities (planning, capital construction, physical plant, deferred maintenance, utilities), security, fire, EH&S, food service, counseling, recreation, and child care. Under the leadership of the base director, NPS has put together a multi-year capital program to be funded through a series of revenue streams, i.e. congressional appropriations, the NPS budget, special projects, and military construction. At the same time, NPS has undertaken a comprehensive recapitalization of its facilities.

The process for setting facilities' priorities has been revisioned to ensure alignment with academic priorities. During this period of growth, NPS went through a detailed process to determine whether there was any space not being fully utilized that could be redeployed and is currently meeting its space needs. This need is mitigated by the fact that much collaborative research is done off-campus. The need to modernize labs and update facilities is driving the recapitalization process currently underway. In addition, NPS is proactively employing strategies to mitigate space needs on campus, such as ensuring work space is available off-campus and working with the local transit agency to minimize the need for additional parking

Recommendations:

NPS should complete its plan to hire a Vice President of Finance and Administration.

NPS should continue to collect data on the strategic planning metrics and begin to use the data for decision making.

The institution should continue to define business practices in the office of Finance and Administration and begin a process for on-going quality assurance of that unit.

SECTION III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Naval Postgraduate School has made impressive progress in fulfilling its objectives stated in the Institutional Proposal. There is much work to be done, but the progress made is a measure of the commitment of the institution and its President and the willingness of its faculty and staff to do the important work to maintain WASC accreditation.

Commendations:

1. The Sponsor, Board of Advisors and leadership of NPS should be commended for ending a period of prolonged instability. The set of actions taken, including the establishment of the AERB, are the cornerstones of the institution's ability to create strategic plans that align with Navy priorities.
2. The faculty and staff of NPS should be commended for their extraordinary ability to translate critical national security challenges into programs that are recognized for innovation and quality and also staffed and resourced to enable students to achieve competence in new mission areas.
3. NPS has a robust culture of review. Because of the direct accountability expected from the sponsoring agencies and the parallel allegiance to academic culture, the institution has developed several cyclical processes of review that involve the entire academic community. Students provide direct and immediate feedback to their faculty as courses progress, either in person, through the section leader (the senior ranking student in the class), or through the Program Officer, and report their feedback often having immediate impact in the courses in question. Other parts of the community, especially Student Services, incorporate student feedback into many aspects of their operation, taking advantage of unusually high response rates on student surveys.
4. NPS is entirely dedicated to the academic and professional success of its students. While many students enter the institution requiring some level of remediation or review in order to begin graduate level coursework, the faculty appear extremely willing to provide the necessary support to bring all students along. In fact, students themselves take responsibility for providing help to their peers, rather than competing against each other. This appears to breed a culture of the expectation of success and degree completion.
5. NPS leadership has embraced an ambitious reorganization of its administrative and academic structures with an eye toward improving decision making.
6. NPS leadership is committed to transparency in its decision making and budgetary process.

7. NPS leadership recognizes the need for ongoing and consistent institutional research and data reporting.
8. NPS has enriched its programs by extending its student population and faculty to include people from the international community.
9. The NPS appears to have moved to solid ground with a clearly defined mission and appropriate organizational structures and decision making processes. They have committed to moving forward with a new financial system, which could help increase revenues, and to ensuring that the budget is transparent and more readily accessible across campus.
10. Over the course of the last five years, NPS has undertaken major efforts to reorganize administrative and decision making functions, integrate planning and budget decisions, identify comparison institutions and reach agreement on a set of metrics related to each of the four major goals in the strategic plan.
11. NPS has made significant improvements in its cyberinfrastructure and related services. These enhancements put NPS on a par with other research universities and have enabled improved support of the academic mission and enhancements to the business processes of the institution.

The WASC visiting recommends that NPS:

1. Complete its planned implementation of its processes and then review the effectiveness of those processes as instruments for the achievement of its mission.
2. Develop a measurement system with clear performance goals that are benchmarked against aspirational peers.
3. Continue to develop a strong university communications program. A strong “brand identity” will be an asset in gaining grant funding and opening doors to partnerships that will strengthen educational programming at NPS.
4. Continue advancement initiatives in order to preserve the institution’s reputation and to ensure its continued success.
5. Continue the collection of student learning evidence where it is happening already, and bring remaining departments along in the development of those processes.
6. Establish a program of documenting these efforts, such that appropriate results can be folded into the various review processes seamlessly rather than reinvented at each juncture.

7. Consider what evidence could be used across most or all review processes (e.g., external program accreditation, curriculum review, program review, WASC review) and document that evidence in such a way that it is accessible.
8. Complete the plan to hire a Vice President of Finance and Administration.
9. Continue to collect data on the strategic planning metrics and begin to use the data for decision making.
10. Continue to define business practices in the office of Finance and Administration and begin a process for on-going quality assurance of that unit.
11. Continue support of information technology and communications services as strategic enablers of the academic mission, and maintain needed flexibility and currency in leading edge technologies to support the academic enterprise.

SECTION IV. PREPARATION FOR EDUCATION EFFECTIVENESS

As the institution moves forward to respond to the EER, it should pay particular attention to the documentation of all activities related to the three themes. With regard to strategic planning, NPS should move ahead full force in implementing the strategic plan, and especially with documenting any discussions and changes in that review. Similarly, with regard to the second theme, the University should implement a policy that requires all programs to employ direct measures of student learning and to report on the data gathered through the assessment process. The EER will focus on examining how well that process has been institutionalized. The review will also examine the student work that is gathered for the assessments and the changes that have been implemented as a result of the assessment process. In addition, careful documentation should be kept regarding the innovative faculty development through PETAL and how that development has affected pedagogy. Finally, the institution should document and be prepared to discuss, the research efforts that are occurring and how those efforts augment student learning. In short, the EE Review will focus on how the three themes reach the classroom and impact learning.