

**REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM
For Reaffirmation of Accreditation**

To Meridian University

April 26-28, 2023

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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

Background

Meridian University, founded in 1993 as the Institute of Imaginal Studies in Petaluma, California offered their first programs in psychology with a MA in Counseling Psychology, MA in Psychology, and a PhD in Psychology. Meridian University was established by faculty from Sonoma State University and three of the founders currently serve as the president, chief academic officer, and board vice-chair. The University currently offers graduate degrees, certificates, and public programs to students around the world. Its mission is to "prepare leaders who will create a more just, sustainable, and compassionate world." Its distinctive transformational learning educational philosophy integrates academic learning, personal transformation, and social engagement.

Meridian's programs are designed to prepare students for careers that make a positive difference in the world, focusing on sustainability, social justice, and human flourishing. The University offers the following master's and doctoral degrees with several concentrations available within each program: Masters in Psychology, Masters in Counseling Psychology, Masters in Business Administration, Masters in Educational Leadership, Doctorate in Psychology (PhD), Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (PsyD), and Doctorate in Organizational Leadership (EdD). The University also offers several non-degree programs in the fields of health and executive coaching, integral practitioner, cultural leadership, and art therapy.

The Masters in Educational Leadership prepares students for careers in teaching, administration, and curriculum development with seven concentrations. The Masters in Business Administration, which at the time of the visit had no students enrolled, is designed to prepare students for careers in business administration with five concentrations. The Clinical Psychology doctoral program prepares students for

careers in clinical psychology and is designed to meet the educational requirements for licensure as a psychologist in California.

Meridian's integrated, innovative curriculum is designed to be experiential and transformative. The university's graduate programs are available 100% online and are also approved for on-site delivery. The distance education delivery model supports students who are working professionals and balancing other life commitments as they move forward in their personal and professional futures. At the time of the WSCUC review, all programs were offered in a distance education format only.

Recent accreditation history

Meridian University first received accreditation by the WASC Senior College University Commission (WSCUC) in 2017 for six years, with an Offsite Review scheduled for Spring 2022 (later delayed to Fall 2022). The Commission called attention to four issues for further development (see Section II, Component 1 below). The Commission requested a progress report due on March 1, 2018 on the Program Review for the EdD in Organizational Leadership and MEd in Educational Leadership, and also scheduled an Interim Report to be submitted by March 1, 2020 to address the four recommendations.

The 2018 progress report was reviewed by WSCUC staff and met the expectation intended by the Commission's 2017 recommendations. It was recommended that Meridian proceed with the Mid-Cycle Review in Spring 2020 (the Mid-Cycle Review did not occur because WSCUC later discontinued the process).

In July 2020, the WSCUC Commission accepted the Interim Report and recommended that Meridian proceed to the Offsite Review in Spring 2022 and Accreditation Visit in Fall 2022 (later revised to Fall 2022 and Spring 2023, respectively).

B. Description of Team's Review Process

After conducting the Offsite Review November 16-17, 2022, the team conducted the Accreditation Visit April 26-28, 2023 where they met and conducted interviews on campus with the University's leadership, including the president/Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the Board, the WSCUC Steering Committee, domain quality managers (DQMs), department chairs, and key administrators from various units. The team also held open forums with faculty, staff, currently enrolled students, and alumni. In addition, the team also examined documentation provided prior to and during the visit. Comments by the Meridian community via the confidential email account were reviewed. The team appreciated the technology support, comfortable meeting rooms, and overall hospitality by the university.

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

The report was clearly written and well organized. It was apparent that the report was the result of months of work and analysis by a broad section of the university's leadership, faculty, and staff. The report provided an excellent starting point for the team's deeper exploration of key issues.

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ESSAYS

A. Component 1: Response to previous Commission actions

The 2017 WSCUC Commission Action Letter following seeking accreditation visit 4 (SAV4) to Meridian University included the following four recommendations:

1. Clarify learning outcomes with attention to measurability, specificity, rigor, and accurate alignment within curriculum maps to generate meaningful and actionable data.

(CFR 2.2b, 2.4, and 4.1)
2. Advance the program review process to include long-range planning and expand the collection and use of internal and external evidence. (CFR 2.7)
3. Support ongoing efforts to achieve institutional goals around diversity in faculty, staff, and student populations. (CFR 1.4)
4. Build capacity in financial management to safeguard institutional resources during the period of planned growth ahead. (CFR 3.4)

The institution was granted Initial Accreditation for six years, with a Progress Report due March 1, 2018 and an Interim Report due March 1, 2020. Following the 2020 Interim Report, the Commission recommended that Meridian University proceed to the scheduled Offsite Review and Accreditation Visit, with particular attention paid to the following issues:

1. Learning outcomes and assessment results need to be clarified for all programs and evidence presented of closing the loop. (CFRs 2.2b, 2.4, and 4.1)

2. The newly developed program review system needs to be fully implemented, with use of external evidence and/or benchmarking, to show how program review is occurring and the results are being used for each program. (CFR 2.7)
3. Staff and faculty recruitment plans and models need to be explicated and data presented and analyzed to show how the diversity of faculty and staff have changed over time to determine if goals are being met. (CFR 1.4)

In their reaffirmation institutional report, Meridian addressed the four recommendations from the Commission Action Letter, indicating that the three Interim Report recommendations (i.e., learning outcomes and assessment, program review systems and use, and faculty and staff diversity) aligned with the 2017 Commission Action Letter recommendations. A review of the institutional report and supporting documents, in addition to the site visit, indicated that the institution is in the initial phases of addressing the actions cited by the Commission. The team noted that most implementations are new, especially in student learning outcomes, program review, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and building financial management capabilities. Due to the new implementation of these initiatives, the team felt that additional time was needed to determine the effectiveness of the institution's efforts. The team's evaluation of each of the four issues from the 2017 CAL are below.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment of Student Learning (CFRs 2.2b, 2.4, and 4.1)

Meridian revised its learning outcomes and established relationships between course, program, and institutional learning outcomes. Revised learning outcomes with rubrics, curriculum maps, and sample syllabi were presented to the team as evidence. A total of seven curriculum maps were presented, showing the alignment of program, course, and institutional learning outcomes. The university has invested in an integrated Assessment and Rubric Management System (ARMS) as part of Salesforce, including learning outcomes, rubrics, and assessment dashboards. The Learning Outcomes Dashboard aligned the

institutional, program, and course learning outcomes. However, the team found the achievement of student learning for each program learning outcome confusing in its presentation and could not clearly determine whether the information was actionable.

During the site visit, program chairs and faculty shared progress in assessing student learning outcomes from a historical narrative approach (i.e., "writing little books about each program") to an evidence-based data approach. Program chairs and faculty emphasized that faculty are responsible for entering student engagement data weekly for each course a student is enrolled in. The engagement metric includes assessing student entries for discussion boards and activities in the platform each week. When asked how this data is used, program chairs and faculty shared that they can reach out to students who do not meet the 80% of discussion posts/activities required for the week, thereby supporting student progress. The emphasis on the student engagement metric is important in assisting student progress and success. The faculty are fully engaged in data entry and tracking student success. However, the engagement metric does not adequately encompass student learning outcomes assessment. When asked about the use of student learning outcomes for individual programs, the faculty asserted that Program Learning Outcomes (PLO) data were collected. However, examples of how the data were used for improvement was not clearly demonstrated. While the team felt that Meridian University has acted on the recommendation to establish learning outcomes and provide results, there was not a clear demonstration of actionable use of the data or of closing the loop to make improvements.

1. Advance Program Review (CFR 2.7)

Improvements to the program review process included staffing an institutional research team with two analysts and expanding data collection. A program review was conducted in June 2022 using the new program review template for four psychology programs (MA in Psychology; MA in Counseling Psychology, PsyD in Clinical Psychology; and PhD in Psychology). The program review included

quantitative and qualitative data, including data on student enrollment, course and program evaluations, alumni data, student grade distributions, retention and completion rates, and licensure pass rates. Data from peer institutions (peers based on institution size, retention and completion rates, diversity, and licensure pass rates) were used by Meridian University as part of the program review. Although program learning outcome data was a section of the program review, the data focused on faculty's rating of students' work relative to PLOs representing an indirect measure of student learning rather than a direct assessment of student learning.

In interviews, full-time faculty, program chairs, and part-time faculty shared that their role with assessment and program review focused on spending much time at the end of the week doing the assessment (i.e., entering engagement data) and doing a deeper dive on discussion posts. Faculty indicated they review this data weekly and quarterly to assess student engagement and progress. Discussion posts are also reviewed for quality and depth of understanding. The faculty did not cite annual program assessments or program reviews in their responses. Instead, they responded at a course level and not an overall program level when asked about program assessment and review. The team found evidence that the faculty use assessment data for improving courses in an ongoing formative assessment approach while teaching a course. However, there was no clear evidence of using data for actionable goals and closing the loop at the programmatic level.

Meridian's use of data dashboards and emphasis on student engagement is a relatively new initiative. Implementing actionable student learning data is in the beginning stages. The team did not find evidence of program review results aligned with budgeting. However, this may be due to their newness relative to this process using the data dashboards. The team found that the university has implemented and advanced its program review process by revising rubrics, using curriculum mapping and data dashboards, and by completing a program review with external reviewers. The team felt that Meridian University is still in

the initial stages of using data for program improvement, creating measurable action plans, and aligning program reviews with budgeting.

2. Growing and Measuring Diversity (CFR 1.4)

Meridian University cites an increase in student, staff, and faculty diversity since 2017 but the data does not include actual headcount for each year so it is difficult to ascertain change over time. The University's dashboard cited the following demographics for 2022:

Category	People of Color	White	Female
Faculty	27%	73%	54.1%
Staff	49%	51%	59.2%
Students	66.5%	33.5%	77.4%

During the visit, Meridian leadership and board members shared a desire to increase diversity for board members as there are currently two openings for board members. The university leadership indicated that there is room for increasing diversity, especially for faculty and students. Both country of origin and ethnicity were cited as indices of diversity. The university has a location in Johannesburg and hopes to increase student and faculty diversity at that location.

3. Financial Management Capability (CFR 3.4)

Meridian recently hired a staff member to lead the new financial services team and a new CPA to support budget, cash, and tax management. In addition, the institution continues to contract with a third-party federal student aid servicer to facilitate the processing of financial aid. The institution also migrated to a

centralized cloud-based integrated accounting system for financial management. A September 2022 memo from Meridian's Fiscal Management Team Lead to the Executive Team indicated that financial stability over the next ten years would be driven by strong enrollment growth from existing programs and growth of services internationally. Annual student enrollment increased from 2021 to 2022, with 181 FTE currently, though enrollment has been between 50 to 100 FTE throughout most of the institution's history.

Meridian recently underwent some reorganization of positions and named a new Chief Financial Officer (CFO) whose responsibilities include oversight of marketing and enrollment. The university has established a Quality Assurance and Legal Affairs (QALA) and an Institutional Research (IR) group that provides data to manage financial capability. The team felt that Meridian demonstrated they had built capacity in financial management to safeguard institutional resources. (Refer to Component 7 of this Report for a thorough sustainability and financial viability review.)

B. 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

Institutional Purposes

The team noted that Meridian defines its mission, institutional purposes, and educational objectives clearly and transparently. The mission statement directly recognizes a responsibility to holistic student development (inner development) and to the professions within its purview as much-needed agents of change. The mission statement is published on the website. It emphasizes the importance of transformational learning, focusing on the contribution to the global public. Regarding educational objectives, the PLOs are available online for its graduate programs and in the catalog. Information on

retention and course completion is provided on the Meridian website. Notably, qualitative data from alumni (alumni testimonials) are also cited.

Integrity and Transparency

There is evidence on the website and in the catalog of the programs offered, required credits, and costs. Policies articulating grievances and complaint procedures, including Title IX, are accessible. It may be necessary to find additional means of communicating these policies to students (current and potential) in the future as Meridian expands its marketing via digital platforms for recruitment. In 2022, Meridian revised its statement of academic freedom and updated the student and faculty handbooks to reflect the revision. Due process procedures are also covered. The University has a non-discrimination policy published in the catalog and online.

The team was concerned that the board was not sufficiently independent from Meridian University since most of the board members had current or previous associations with the University as employees or alumni, and/or have been a board member for extended periods of time (up to 25 years). The team was concerned that Meridian University leadership also serves on the board which would prevent independent decision-making. Although Meridian University leadership may recuse themselves during board decision-making, the team was still concerned regarding true independence of the board for decision-making, oversight, and fiduciary responsibilities. In addition, the team did not find evidence of formal board development. Plus, while there are designated two-year terms for board members, there is no maximum number of terms that may be served by members or board leadership.

Subject to the Commission's review, the team's overall finding is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 1 but will need to continue to address board independence, development, and diversity.

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions

Teaching and Learning

Meridian provided a detailed accounting of its Integral Transformative Assessment Framework (ITAF), in which they describe transformational learning as "experiential, embodied, relational, systematic, integral, transcultural and dialogic" (ITAF page 5). Integrating the National Institute for Learning Outcome's (NILOA) Transparency Framework into its pedagogy, the university emphasizes "Improving Institutional Effectiveness with Cultivating Institutional Wisdom." The ITAF provides a solid theoretical foundation for the University's mission, structure, management, and pedagogy, bridging theory and application well.

Meridian offers a comprehensive curriculum across three disciplines: psychology, education, and business. (CFR 2.1 and 2.2) Seven degrees are conferred: one MBA, one master's degree in education, one doctorate in education, two master's degrees in psychology, and doctorate degrees in psychology. Fifteen concentrations complement its graduate degree programs. The university curriculum offers online and onsite labs and coordinates with students and site supervisors regarding mandatory fieldwork. Although Meridian conducts fieldwork evaluations, alumni and current students agree that a substantive orientation to fieldwork would be beneficial. The team was concerned that the students are not provided with adequate support in securing fieldwork placements. During the site visit, students and alumni requested an orientation to better prepare for their fieldwork experience. Students also shared that they are responsible for finding fieldwork placements and felt the university should take a more active role in supporting them.

Faculty comprises a cadre of educators whose social activism is aligned with their dedication to teaching. (CFR 3.1) The team encourages Meridian to mine its social justice-oriented curriculum, student support services, and public works to highlight its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work. The university has the expertise within the ranks of its faculty to create an academic discourse that is

absent of the casual talk and dismissive attitudes that diminish and marginalize DEI work in the public arena. The team encourages faculty, staff, students, and leadership to embrace what they do well, modeling this behavior for other universities.

Five faculty serve as "core" faculty shaping the curriculum with the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and conducting most student advising. The team recommends that Meridian develop and implement a more comprehensive evaluation system for full-time faculty that goes beyond the collection of student evaluations of teaching. In addition, Meridian is advised to offer faculty appropriate professional development opportunities in regard to pedagogy and online teaching, at a minimum. (CFR 3.2 and 3.3)

Student Learning and Success

Meridian attracts social justice and activist-minded students. As expressed by the alumni and current students, Meridian provides a space for education and psychology professionals to grow their expertise in ways that complement the increasing demand for practitioners to become more mindful of the needs of students and clients. The team concludes that Meridian students intentionally seek a curriculum that disrupts their preconceived notions and challenges their worldviews.

In AY 2018-19, Meridian University transitioned from “cohort advisors” to assigning students individual academic advisors. Meridian University states in its 2022 Reaffirmation Report their new academic advising model addresses equity and inclusion. Meridian outlines the new academic advising model in the Student Handbook. An alumnus commented on the benefits of the former “cohort model” highlighting Meridian’s dedication to community building among faculty and students. The Review Team encourages Meridian University to continue to identify community building opportunities in the fully online learning environment.

The university transitioned to a fully online course delivery system during the pandemic. (CFR 3.5)

During the onsite visit, faculty and students attested that Meridian works judiciously to maintain its mission in the virtual environment. Faculty show dedication and commitment to their students and the learning process. As noted by a recent graduate, "I felt seen online." Students enroll as part-time or full-time with an option to take accelerated courses. The university clearly communicates its degree requirements and candidly emphasizes the in-depth self-reflection that exemplifies the Transformational Learning Curriculum.

In addition, the university changed the length of courses from a ten-week format to a seven-week format. Per the university's eight-year program review of the psychology program, "in preparation for a shift to those courses that were online now being consolidated to seven weeks from the more spacious 10-week model, all of our 10-week online courses that were slated to be taught in the 2018-19 year were restructured to be held over a seven-week span." Further, the program review notes that by the end of the 2019-20 AY, "all existing courses in the program had now been restructured to seven weeks via course merger and/or credit increases with its subsequent enlarged course content" (Program Review June 2022, page 14). The current website shows the LMS system opening for fall 2022 with courses beginning on September 13, 2022 and closing with final papers due on October 30, 2022. The review team encourages Meridian University to clarify its adherence to WSCUC Credit Hour policy that defines a credit hour as approximately one hour of direct faculty instruction and two hours of out-of-classroom work each week over 10 weeks for each quarter hour of credit. The review team requests clarification on how Meridian University calculates the credit hour for their seven-week quarter given that the team was unable to verify instructional time as meeting WSCUC policy. During the onsite visit, students expressed concern regarding the amount of course content compressed into a seven-week format. Students also requested earlier notification of course offerings, and more frequent offering of courses for graduation.

A new student enrollment process, which requires accepted students to submit a Transformational Learning History, minimizes enrolling students who are not a "good fit" with the University. The team did not have clarity on what criteria is used to determine “good fit” for Meridian University. The institution’s website provides information about the University, with plans to integrate additional student and faculty video testimonials. In addition, the University's various public works and its Transformational Learning Center's activities support its established public image.

Meridian has experienced much change since the 2020 interim report as it prepared for significant growth. The University has transitioned fully online and has engaged in academic, organizational, and operational adjustments evidenced by: 1) hiring faculty and other key new personnel, 2) establishing fourteen domains to facilitate operations and teaching and learning, 3) revising its Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and PLOs, 4) revising the assessment and program review process, and 5) reinvigorating Institutional Research (IR). The university currently has approximately 180 FTE, yet hopes to reach 500 FTE. Although the 2022- 2023 academic year witnessed an increase in student enrollment, the team is concerned that Meridian University set reasonable enrollment goals for its unique learning model.

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

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

Meridian’s commitment to developing and applying resources to strategic priorities is evidenced by its significant investment in infrastructure and staff. The university has implemented a scalable data capture infrastructure for its online instruction model. Its infrastructure tracks multi-year initiatives and outcomes by program, team, and department (domain). Collaboration among departments (domains) supports that the data captured is relevant to decision-making for the academic team and the allocation of

resources. As the systems mature, focused data capture with closer collaboration between administrative, academic, and strategic leadership will enhance its ability to apply university resources where needed most. Although the University has created a comprehensive data infrastructure, the use of this data for decision making is in its beginning stages and teams are working on determining what data is most pertinent for decision-making. (CFR 3.5 and 3.7)

Recent audits resulted in small operating deficits despite significant investments in infrastructure and staff. When it became apparent that ambitious 2023 revenue goals would not be achieved, the university adapted its financial plan to complement lower-than-projected revenue streams.

Subject to the Commission's review, the team's overall finding 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

The team found that Meridian has demonstrated commitment to the review under the WSCUC Standards, bringing the university community together to assess compliance and to determine areas of strength, weakness, opportunities, and threats; and building an infrastructure to collect essential data for institutional planning and evaluation, as required by Standard 4. In addition to the University's completion of Appendix 2A: Compliance with WSCUC Standards Worksheet, evidence for compliance with individual CFRs is embedded in the context of the essays.

Quality Assurance Processes

Meridian has implemented quality assurance processes in academic areas, including an integrated Assessment and Rubric Management System (ARMS) for program assessment and program review, the creation of rubrics and curriculum maps, revised institutional learning outcomes, and student engagement

metrics. The IR staff has expanded in the non-academic area, and a quality assurance and legal affairs team was established. Data is provided to each university domain team to track enrollments, the effectiveness of marketing strategies, the admissions process, and strategic planning. The university has invested in Salesforce and part-time and full-time employees to support the collection and dissemination of data. As these infrastructures are relatively new, periodic reviews to ensure the effectiveness of institutional research and the usefulness of the data generated is in their initial phases. New curriculum and approval processes were lacking though it should be noted that the university has not built a new program for some time. (CFR 4.1 and 4.2)

As evidenced by the institution's investment in data infrastructure and part-time and full-time staff to support this work, the university has demonstrated a commitment to institutional learning and improvement in collecting and disseminating essential data. Meridian leadership, faculty, and staff shared their engagement in data collection and use of data. For example, faculty enter engagement data weekly based on student discussion board posts and activities in each course. This data is reviewed to assess student progress. Although Meridian referenced the Institutional Report Table of Contents for evidence of CFR 4.2, showing evidence of specific data results, the team did not see evidence of a university-wide comprehensive approach to effectively using data. Due to a large amount of shared data, the team found it challenging to ascertain what data is most needed and used for institutional improvement. (CFR 4.3)

Institutional Learning and Improvement

The team found that Meridian's full-time and part-time faculty are engaged in teaching and learning, especially the institutional foci of transformative learning. Faculty enter weekly student engagement data, which assists with tracking student progress and success. Faculty interviews supported that student engagement data within a course was utilized to adjust the course. However, specific examples of written documents were not provided. Faculty evaluate student work and assess learning outcomes using rubrics, and annual and multi-year program reviews are conducted. The team is concerned that the explicit use of

data from program assessment and program review for curricular improvement was not evident for actionable data and closing the loop. (CFR 4.4)

Meridian engages in surveys, interviews, and focus groups to engage stakeholders in the assessment and alignment of educational programs (Creative Inquiry Groups). The students are surveyed many times throughout their student life-cycle, including admissions, student satisfaction, course evaluation, library usage, and as alumni. Meridian University shared that they will also assess the experiences of the faculty and field work supervisors and students engaged in fieldwork experiences though a written plan, draft survey tool, or timeline was not provided. It would be helpful for the University to engage in these planned surveys, especially as these can directly relate to identifying areas of strength and weakness. (CFR 4.5)

The three-year strategic plan ends in August 2023. The university plans to use existing Creative Inquiry Groups (i.e., board, faculty, students, alumni) to elicit information to help form the new strategic plan. The board also holds a yearly strategic planning meeting and hopes to approve the new strategic plan by fall 2023. When asked what data is essential to help frame the strategic plan, university leadership cited licensure pass rates, time to degree, prospective students (who applies and who enrolls and where they are coming from), economic equity scholarships, student support services, and market analysis. Based on the list of data points, it appeared that the University is targeting a strategic plan to help build enrollments and ensure quality for their students. (CFR 4.6)

As a small and pedagogically focused institution, Meridian is aware of the changing landscape in higher education and its need to adapt to external challenges (i.e., drop in enrollment in higher education, movement to distance education, more competition). The University has focused on building capacities and infrastructure to grow enrollments while keeping the essence of a small university focused on transformational learning. Whether the University will remain distance education only or provide in-person or hybrid course offerings based on student needs is uncertain. The University has not yet

determined if it will provide in-person learning labs and the future use of international educational centers. At the time of the visit, Meridian hoped to keep all options open. The university has attempted to diversify its portfolio of program offerings by adding an MBA program. However, the team questioned the program's viability due to lack enrollment for the past four years

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

C. Component 3: Degree Programs: Meaning, quality, and integrity of the degrees

Meaning of the Degree

Meridian defines what it means for a graduate to hold a degree from the institution by focusing on "Education that Transforms" and adopting an academic philosophy of educating for meta-modernity (see Component 5). The curriculum combines transformational learning with informational learning, as detailed in the "Integral Transformative Assessment Framework" document. (CFR 1.1) The university emphasizes not only professional development but also personal growth and publishes student achievement data on its website, including graduation, retention, and learning outcome achievement. (CFR 1.2) Meridian offers programs at the master's and doctoral levels across Psychology, Education, and Business, with diverse concentrations in each. All programs are designed to have an experiential component. Meridian University graduates work in various professional settings, such as psychotherapy, coaching, facilitation, social entrepreneurship, and organizational development. The significance of Meridian's transformative learning approach is evident in its admissions process, which requires all applicants to attend faculty-led information sessions to establish expectations from the beginning.

Standards of Performance

Meridian University employs various processes to ensure the meaning, integrity, and quality of the degree. One such process is the annual assessment of PLOs and curriculum maps revamped in 2017 through a Learning Outcomes Refresh Project that included faculty involvement. (CFR 2.3 and 2.4) Three PLOs are shared across all programs. Program Review that includes an external reviewer takes place every eight years, a longer interval than most institutions. (CFR 2.7). Additionally, the institution benchmarks annually, and qualified faculty with doctoral degrees teach all the courses. A quarterly academic review conducted over the past four academic years focused on providing sufficient support for each student, reviewing academic progress, and implementing interventions as necessary. Meridian also uses ARMS to regularly assess learning outcomes with appropriate rubrics, facilitating better alignment between learning outcomes and courses and with some disaggregation of data (CFR 2.10). The university offers a robust onboarding process, which has led to fewer students struggling early in their academic journey. The student engagement report is a unique approach to supporting student success, although more evidence of its use is needed. The Meridian University Data Analytics Initiative (MUDAI) demonstrates a commitment to using data and data dashboards. However, it is unclear how this initiative is incorporated into the Quality Improvement Plan. (CFR 4.1 and 4.2)

Meridian uses several standards to measure its degrees' meaning, quality, and integrity, such as the ILOs, revised in 2020 and aligning well with the institution's mission, degrees, and academic approach (CFR 2.3). Four ILOs include leadership capacities, creative inquiry, professional knowledge, and professional behavior. It is unclear, however, if ILOs have been assessed directly. The PLOs are another measure deemed relevant and challenging for each program, given the expected levels of proficiency and advanced mastery in the majority of courses in each program, as indicated by the curriculum maps. Moreover, graduates' performance on licensure exams (BBS MFT Licensure Exam and BOP Psychologist Licensure

Exam) is an additional indicator, as they have either exceeded or come close to the statewide average in recent years. (CFR 2.6)

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

Assessment of Student Learning

Meridian University has a program assessment and program review process. The university has engaged in an assessment initiative to create a stronger assessment structure that included the following:

- Revised ILOs, PLOs, and CLOs, creating better alignment and measurable criteria. (CFR 2.3 and 2.4)
- Updated curriculum aligned with the Transformative Learning model, integrating ILOs and PLOs. (CFR 2.3)
- Tracking of student progress and engagement. (CFR 2.4, 2.6, and 2.10)
- Technological infrastructure that yields data analytics. (CFR 2.9, 2.10, 4.1, and 4.4)

The faculty-led effort to revise the ILOs and PLOs yielded clear assessment outcome descriptions and rubrics. (CFR 2.7) A fourth new ILO, professional behavior, was created. Updated rubrics assess ILOs and mark sufficient qualitative differences between each developmental level: initial, emerging, proficient, and advanced. The team recognizes Meridian's efforts to integrate student accountability into their curriculum, encouraging students to remain aware of cultural shifts and their effect on the learning environment, threading the Transformative Learning Model framework throughout their PLOs. The addition of "Development Edge" to PLOs supports educators' needs to identify and implement intervention strategies as students move from one developmental stage to the next.

Meridian provided a Benchmarking Process Map that illustrates where assessments are collected and aligned to outcomes. Assessment of student learning occurs at the course level and the program level. (CFR 2.3) The faculty assess student learning for the three specific PLOs shared across all programs, Reflexivity, Empathy and Collaboratively (REC). In addition, student engagement is assessed in each course. (CFR 2.6 and 2.7) IR aggregates the data and utilizes Power BI to publish findings in several faculty, staff, and leadership dashboards to improve the University's curriculum. (CFR 4.8) Students struggling with the curriculum receive an update on their progress through Quarterly Academic Review letters, bolstering the university's efforts to implement meaningful intervention strategies. (CFR 2.12)

Achievement Gaps and "Closing the Loop"

Meridian's grading structure, beyond a cursory use of Bloom's Taxonomy, aligns with its culturally conscious approach. As part of the Learning Outcomes Refresh Project, Meridian revised its syllabi producing a template faculty use throughout the program, as evidenced in the provided Psychology syllabus. The team encourages Meridian University to consider the number of rubrics that complement their syllabi. For example, the Psychology syllabus included ten rubrics: one ILO rubric, three assessment rubrics aligning the PLO with Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs), three-course engagement rubrics, and three writing assignment rubrics. The team questions the meaningfulness of the rubrics to students as they progress through their courses as well as the value and use of the data for continuous improvement.

Meridian University strengthened student access to electronic resources through adoption of databases such as, ProQuest and EBSCOhost. Further, Meridian utilizes several means to raise student awareness of available library resources such as, listing library online resources in course syllabi, the Pivot LMS via Knowledge Base, and the student newsletter. The Scholarship Team reviews the university's online resources twice a year. During the onsite visit, the Scholarship Team expressed an urgent need for writing and research support within the classroom, suggesting this dilemma presents an opportunity for the

librarian to teach a course on research and writing. During the onsite visit, students commended the university for offering an abundance of research-related materials, while expressing the need for more in-depth, one-on-one help from library services. Although the current editorial service benefits doctoral students, the Review Team encourages further buttressing of library services, such as increasing the university's collections and library services.

The Scholarship Team stated they welcome opportunities to integrate their services throughout the university's curriculum creating a more dynamic and engaging graduate culture of research and writing. (CFR 2.2b) The Scholarship Team expressed interest in working with students earlier in their academic journey and tailoring their services to fit varied learning styles. The Review Team encourages the university to access and put into action the beneficial services offered by the Scholarship Team.

Students select the "team" in Pivot to direct their question, then the email is vetted by a staff member, and routed to the correct person. It is not uncommon for the email to return to the student for clarification. The Assessment Team confirmed a similar process for students to request meetings with their academic advisors. Based on their explanation, it can take ten days between an initial student request to meet with an advisor, and the date of meeting to take place.

As part of the Transformational Learning environment, even within its email response system, Meridian University encourages students to "help themselves." The Review Team acknowledges the extension of Meridian's philosophy throughout its student support services. However, the Review Team encourages Meridian to evaluate its responsiveness to students and implement changes that will reduce student wait-time.

Meridian's investment in Salesforce and associated software, such as ARMS, has enabled the university to collect data for student progress and assessment. The team recognizes that more time is needed to fully implement the ARMS system and to determine the effectiveness of this system for actionable assessment

of continuous improvement based on outcomes data. Meridian experienced problems aggregating and analyzing data across multiple platforms as evidenced in the Psychology Program Review.

Evidence of Competencies and Program Outcomes Being Met

Meridian provided a detailed Benchmarking Process Map illustrating QALA's role in ensuring the university meets competency standards in psychology, education, and business. (CFR 4.1) Psychology and Education programs integrate external professional competencies relative to their respective fields. (CFR 2.2) The team makes note of the great success of Meridian alumni in gaining licensure. Between 2018 and 2022, about 88% of alumni taking the Board of Behavioral Sciences Exam passed.

Similarly, between 2017 and 2021, about 74% of Meridian alumni taking the Board of Psychology exam passed. In discussions with the team, alumni remarked that they felt prepared to work within their fields.

All programs share three specific learning outcomes, Reflexivity, Empathy and Collaboratively (REC) which were integrated into the new syllabi template. (CFR 2.3) Meridian assesses each student's REC mastery in every course and uses this assessment as part of the overall student engagement assessment. It also assesses a specific PLO each quarter, integrating findings into its annual Program Review. A more detailed accounting of student progress focuses on weekly student engagement and tracking of completion progress. The Dissertation Progress Report keeps students on track and engaged with the university and alumni expressed appreciation for a supportive dissertation process that kept them on track.

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

Meridian's distinctive character of "Educating for Meta-Modernity" provides a holistic perspective of student success, integrating informational learning with transformational learning. (CFR 1.1) For the university, transformative learning is a change process involving inner development: shifts in perspectives, core beliefs, habits, assumptions, schemas, mental models, and mindsets. The purpose of

transformative learning within this context is to become more capable of engaging in complex challenges and collaborations, not just about acquiring information and skills for professional practice. During the team's onsite visit, faculty shared that their definition of student success was that "transformational learning entails a shift in "perceptual lenses enabling graduates to inhabit new and more complex emergent landscapes."

The university has made changes to improve student success, including implementing an academic advising framework that assigns faculty advisors to students from enrollment to completion. This has resulted in higher one-year retention rates of 88.4% and two-year rates of 92.9%. (CFRs 1.4 and 2.10)

The university has also increased awareness of student support options, including establishing a Scholarship Team and Key Student Resources page in syllabi, implementing an Early Warning System based on student engagement, and creating pathways to track student progress.

Specifically, as evidenced by the university's new Student Success Dashboard, student success is also defined through the metrics of student retention, completion rates, student engagement rates, graduation, and program completion times, grade distribution, ARMS assessments (see Component 4), and licensure pass rates and placement. (CFR 1.6)

Student Learning

Academic Advising: Meridian's institutional report defines academic advising as a core student success initiative that brings together key constituencies on campus. (see Component 4) Meridian has made concerted efforts to strengthen its advising structure and tracking of student progress. (CFRs 2.3 and 2.12) Before 2018-19, the University assigned an entire cohort to the same academic advisor, referred to as a cohort advisor. An academic advising department and system for assigning individual students to academic advisors has only existed since that time. In the last four years, the university's faculty have created and implemented an academic advising framework in which faculty advisors work one-on-one

with students from enrollment to graduation. Academic advising at Meridian includes academic support, career and professional guidance, and REC coaching; three learning outcomes are shared across all degree programs essential to Integral Transformative Assessment. Team meetings with faculty and staff revealed that many student advising requests were to discuss career opportunities and employment questions.

The university uses documentation (notes) of advising discussions and the number of visits as an outcome measurement. At the time of the report, it was unclear how these data elements are related to the overall assessment of these activities. Staff acknowledged that more work needs to be done with sharing advising data among constituencies. Students and alumni also shared frustrations about timely responses to requests to meet with advisors and notifications of course availability prior to registration.

Student Success Initiatives and Support

Onboarding: Beginning in the academic year 2019-20, faculty and staff worked together following the establishment of a formalized academic advising structure to create a new onboarding process for every student. This process includes an orientation meeting with the Student Services staff, a welcome meeting with their faculty academic advisor to develop an individualized Academic Onboarding Plan and a fixed-two quarter curriculum. Overall, the team learned that students viewed the onboarding process favorably and attributed the interview experience with the admission advisor as both "informative and welcoming."

Data-Driven Interventions: The university has implemented an Early Warning System based on student engagement metrics. (see Component 4) It also implemented pathways to track student progress during the post-course work period in support of timely graduation. The team encourages Meridian to identify additional specific data metrics outside of those considered to be student engagement metrics to generate actionable results that evaluate the effectiveness of the Early Warning System and its impact on retention rates.

Evidence of Student Success

Student Success Dashboard: The Student Success Dashboard is disaggregated by degree program, age, and ethnicity. The dashboard provides institutional information about student retention, completion, ARMS assessments, and licensure pass rates. Small sample sizes within demographics for each category affects data quality and limit its applicability to inform decision-making.

Student Satisfaction and Engagement Outcomes: Meridian relies on multiple indirect measures to collect student and alumni data (e.g., global engagement surveys and focus groups led by the faculty via Creative Inquiry Groups). The data collected informs the professional development of these groups, which, in turn, leads to new strategies for targeted outreach and support to students in key areas such as financial aid and advising.

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

Use of Program Review to Inform Decision-Making

Meridian's Program Review process, supervised by the QALA team, focuses on collecting, aggregating, and interpreting quarterly assessment data. (CFRs 4.1 and 4.3) IR plays an essential role in ensuring assessment data is shared across the University and coalesces into an annual Program Review Report for each degree program.

The Fall Annual Program Review begins with IR publishing student survey data, assessment, learning outcome analytics, and other important metrics to the Annual Program Review Dashboard each quarter. The DQM reviews the data and prepares an Annual Program Review Report, submitted to the appropriate Program Chair for review. The CAO and program chair review assessment of student learning of PLOs. Given the newness of this process, the team understands that Meridian needs time to identify substantive

ways to "close the loop" and effective use of the data collection. The team encourages Meridian to consider ways to integrate meaningful data of student learning outcomes and may wish to include qualitative student feedback in its frequent assessment, including Program Review. Currently, much of the assessment process relies heavily on quantitative measures. Meridian provided one program review of the Psychology program, which included a discussion of its theoretical framework but little discussion of its findings and evidence was not provided for closing the loop (i.e., showing effective use of data for improvement. Meridian utilizes Program Review to modify its Quality Improvement Plan, integrating stakeholder feedback across the campus community. (CFR 4.5, 4.7, and 4.8)

Assessment of Student Learning

Tracking of student progress has been improved through the modifications to the QAR, which comprises two components, Course Evaluations and Integral Assessment. Students provide a quantitative review of each completed course for faculty feedback on the course. Most notably, faculty assess student engagement during each course, measured by student participation in course activities, including discussion posts and written assignments. (CFR 2.3 and 2.10) Meridian expects students to participate in at least 80% of the course activities, emphasizing substantive theoretical engagement in the discussion posts. A robust notification system, facilitated by the Assessment Team and the Student Development Committee, alerts students when their academic performance is in jeopardy. The team found that the university's focus on intervention strategies reflects its intent to address achievement gaps and support student success.

Use of Institutional Data to Support and Inform Decision-Making

Meridian's investment in IR included hiring a new staff member. IR manages a variety of dashboards used to create campus-wide engagement in assessing student learning and program review. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 3.6, and 3.10) The university's revised organizational structure includes establishing fourteen

domains focused on teaching, learning, and university operations. The team encourages Meridian to consider how it manages the flow of information, especially relative to program review, across all domains and how it interprets assessment and program review data in meaningful ways to exact change throughout its curriculum and operations.

G. Component 7: Sustainability: Financial viability, preparing for the changing higher education environment

Meridian University employs a full-time CEO and CFO motivated to lead growth and a global presence over the next strategic planning cycle. (CFRs 3.6 and 3.8) Operating results for the past three years show a small operational deficit; retained earnings are sufficient to avoid reporting an accumulated deficit. Audited financial statements for fiscal years 2021 and 2022 show healthy tuition and fee growth from 2021 to 2022. The institution projects comparable increases in tuition income for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. Expenses grew at a comparable rate resulting in operating deficits. Increases in expenses are attributable to increased investment in scalable technology and staff. (CFR 3.4)

QALA systems collect, distribute, and analyze data related to educational effectiveness. However, the team found no evidence that the data collected and distributed was used to inform decisions about the prioritization or the allocation of resources. Embedding assessment results in financial operational planning would more closely link the program improvement and the availability of resources. (CFRs 3.5, 3.7, and 4.3)

Meridian's 2023-based revenue forecasts an increase of over 30% compared to 2022 actual revenue. The team had some concerns about the university's evidence to support proposed enrollment growth projections.

Essential to assessing financial sustainability is considering broad internal and external determinants that may impact projections from diverse perspectives that build on the depth of experience held by current

leadership. (CFR 3.9) The team recommends bringing in additional knowledge and expertise in the following areas:

- diverse higher education leadership experience with knowledge of WSCUC Standards;
- business development, promotion, and enrollment management experience;
- global perspective for the expansion of academic programs; and
- online program delivery, assessment, and faculty development.

Meridian created a financial plan that is flexible enough to adjust expenses as necessary when faced with revenue shortfalls. Comprehensive systems were developed to inform evidence-based decision-making.

The data collection systems, coupled with informed financial planning, can strengthen the development of a strategic plan with a solid, viable future.

H. Component 9: Reflection and plans for improvement

Based on the review of Meridian University's institutional report, site visit, and meetings with staff, faculty, students, leadership, board, and other constituencies, the team regards Meridian University as committed to its mission to "educate leaders with the capacities, skills, and knowledge essential for transforming the professions of Psychology, Business, and Education." Meridian is dedicated to institutional improvement and responded to Commission letters to comply with WSCUC Standards and CFRs.

The university built an infrastructure to ensure development of evidence-based decision-making and institutional planning. Its leadership and board are engaged and determined to increase enrollments and meet student needs in this ever-changing and more competitive landscape in higher education while maintaining their focus on transformational learning and improving professions for the public good.

As evidenced in this report, the university built assessment processes for student learning outcomes and program review, increased institutional research capabilities, created and collected data systems to inform decision-making, and increased staff positions. The university reorganized some positions (i.e., CFO) to support sustainability and financial management. In addition, Meridian University engaged in new marketing strategies and began to offer programs for part-time students.

The team commends Meridian for its commitment to the university mission, for its collaborative work and processes in building a sustainable infrastructure, and for its dedicated faculty. Although the institution has made strides to advance the University, the team has found that several of these initiatives are in the initial stages, and more time is needed to assess the full impact and effectiveness. The recommendations aligned to WSCUC Standards and CFRs fall in the following areas: (1) Diversity, equity, and inclusion across the University; (2) Student support services; (3) Clear use of data for institutional improvement and decision-making; (4) Faculty evaluation, development and training; and (5) Compliance with federal credit hour requirements with the change from a 10-week to a 7-week format. The team encourages the leadership of Meridian to communicate and engage with the university community and external stakeholders in its upcoming strategic planning process.

Section III – Findings, Commendations, and Recommendations

The team commends Meridian University for the following:

1. A strong commitment to the university mission and public good through transformational learning.
2. Collaborative work and the progress made in building the university's assessment infrastructure and processes.
3. A genuine institution-wide commitment to student success, as demonstrated by its investment of resources in infrastructure and technology to improve efficiency.
4. The dedication and attention faculty show their students. It is clear that individual faculty members care deeply for them and will do what it takes to facilitate their learning and development.

The team recommends that Meridian University respond to the following issues:

1. Leverage expertise to bring direction and leadership to foster an institutional culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion. (CFRs 4.2, 4.6, and 4.7)
2. Increase writing support, library services, and access to relevant collections to support learning for the master's and doctoral students. (CFRs 3.1 and 3.5)
3. Enhance responsiveness to student advising and degree planning requests to ensure timely progression toward graduation. (CFR 2.12)
4. Prioritize continued development and implementation of assessment efforts with an emphasis on establishing clear and consistent student success metrics. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.10, 4.1, and 4.4)
5. Develop and implement a comprehensive evaluation process for full-time faculty consistent with institutional mission. (CFR 3.2)

6. Provide professional development and training for faculty to enhance online pedagogical approaches, curriculum development, and effectiveness of advising. (CFR 3.3)
7. Seek Board development opportunities to strengthen effectiveness and independence while enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion of board membership. (CFRs 1.4 and 3.9)
8. Ensure compliance with federal credit hour requirements given the reduction of a quarter from ten weeks to seven weeks. (CFRs 1.6, 2.1, and 2.2b)

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 Credit Hour Policy from the Consumer Information Page	Is this policy easily accessible? X <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where is the policy located? https://meridianuniversity.edu/admissions/consumer-information/credit-hour-policy Comments: Meridian's definition of a credit hour on the website contends that their operations are consistent with the Code of Federal Regulations, sections 600.2 and 600.24, but this was not something that the team was able to verify. The website cites the following: "the amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency reasonably approximating not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately...ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time." The online classroom includes engaging in weekly Zoom classes (in real-time or watching the recordings) and their associated writings, listening to or viewing online presentations, participating in the related group discussion forums, responding to posts and developing weekly writing assignments, plus out-of-class student work for each week of the quarter, for a 1.5 to 3- hour ratio between classroom and out of class student work. A credit hour is assumed to be a 50-minute period. Periodic Review of Course Alignment with the Credit Hour Policy New courses should be reviewed and approved by the curriculum committee for compliance with the credit hour policy. Review of the credit hour policy is a component of the annual program review process. This involves review of the policy as it pertains to selected courses.
Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour Credit Hour Policy from the Consumer Information Page Also see appendix 6E. Psychology 8-Year Program Review (8 years ending 8/31/2021)	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 X <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input type="checkbox"/> YES X <input type="checkbox"/> NO Comments: Meridian University cites "New courses should be reviewed and approved by the curriculum committee for compliance with the credit hour." In the MU credit hour policy. The university indicated that 2 courses are reviewed each year to meet the periodic review of credit hour assignments in the 8-year psychology program

	review document. There were no other schedules presented for credit hour review nor evidence of this occurring in other programs. This is especially important as the university has changed from a 10-week course length to a 7-week course length.
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet Academic Calendar (website)	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA- Courses are Distance Education
	Comments: The academic calendar does not indicate any on-ground meetings but only indicates term sessions start and end with other details (i.e., when papers are due, grades due, last day of registration, etc.)
Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses <i>Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.</i>	How many syllabi were reviewed? Three
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? Online
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Psychology, Education, Business
See appendices 4M. Sample Syllabus: Education, 4N. Sample Syllabus: Business, and 4P. Sample Syllabus: Psychology.	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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: Each syllabus contains the following statement regarding credit hour. Note that Meridian University has a quarter hour system indicating that there should be 30 hours of instruction and 60 hours of out of class work. Meridian University leadership indicated that the transition from a 10-week to a 7-week format was done keeping the same amount of work for each course. The WSCUC team did not see this evidence as we reviewed only the current courses. Each syllabi states the following: "Meridian grants academic credit using the quarter credit hour. At Meridian, the credit hour is the amount of work that reasonably approximates 3.6 hours of work per week for seven (7) weeks and verified by evidence of student achievement, including: 1) Time spent in Zoom course meetings and responding to them; 2) Time spent preparing for class; 3) Time spent responding to forum posts; 4) Time spent taking collaboratively-oriented exams; 5) Time spent researching, writing, and revising papers and other written work; 6) Time spent preparing for and completing a final project, presentation, or performance; and 7) Time spent in learning activities that entail imaginative writing and other applications of the expressive arts. For the purposes of these calculations, the credit hour is assumed to be a 50-minute period." The WSCUC team found that the calculated hours of 25.2 (3.6 hours x 7) is short of the 30 hours of instruction required for a quarter hour and was unsure how the additional 60 hours of out-of-class work was calculated.
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) <i>Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.</i>	How many syllabi were reviewed? No syllabi were provided by the university for clinical hour courses.
	What kinds of courses?
	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)?
	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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO

Not Applicable	Comments: Syllabi showing clinical hours or independent study were not provided. The WSCUC team was unable to verify that the institution meets these requirements based on the information provided and their website. In addition, students shared their frustration in understanding the requirements for fieldwork during the site visit.
Sample program information (catalog, website, or other program materials) 2022-23 Academic Catalog MA in Psychology Program Description MCP Program Description PsyD Program Description PhD in Psychology Program Description MEd Program Description EdD Program Description MBA Program Description	How many programs were reviewed? Three
	What kinds of programs were reviewed? Psychology, Education, Business – full-degree programs
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)?
	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: The catalog and website for each program support that the programs are of a generally acceptable length.

Review Completed By: Laurie Dodge
Date: April 29, 2023

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 Integrity of Marketing and Recruitment Policy (Website: Consumer Info)	Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students? X <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Comments: This was also verified in meeting with the head of admissions and admissions advisors during the site visit.
Degree completion and cost Cost of Attendance MA in Psychology Program Description (length) MCP Program Description (length) PsyD Program Description (length) PhD in Psychology Program Description (length) MEd Program Description (length) EdD Program Description (length) MBA Program Description (length) Academic Structure (Web Page)	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? X <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? X <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Comments: This information is found on its website.
Careers and employment Student Success BPPE School Performance Fact Sheet BPPE Annual Report	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? X <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? X <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: There are several programs that lead to licensure that the institution clearly provides information for. The employment data of its graduates are in the BPPE school performance fact sheet and in its alumni survey that was provided as an appendix.

*§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: Anthony Lee Date: May 9, 2023

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 Grievance Policy (Website: Consumer Info) 2022-23 Academic Catalog (Page 142)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Is so, where? The policy is easily accessible on the university's webpage titled "Grievance Procedure." Comments: The student grievance process is communicated to students in a fair and balanced manner. The process includes an opportunity for an appeal and establishes fair timelines between generation of the initial report and the initiation of the appeal process.
Process(es)/ procedure Grievance Policy (Website: Consumer Info)	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, please describe briefly: The university requires students to submit a grievance within 45 days of becoming aware of the issue. The Grievance Officer investigates the matter, and generates a report made accessible to the student. If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Comments: During the onsite visit, several students indicated that they felt uneasy about approaching the university with their complaints. The students referenced a new Student Handbook that specifically addresses negative discourse about the university. Students suggested that Meridian University could benefit from holding open forums with students to strengthen the lines of communication.
Records Student complaints are kept in the student record and are maintained by the state and federal regulations pertaining to the maintenance of Student Records. In addition, Meridian maintains a complaint log.	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where? Meridian University holds student complaints in the individual student's record and maintains a complaint log. Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO If so, please describe briefly: Comments: Further, it is unclear to the Review Team how well Meridian supports students during the grievance process.

*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)

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

Review Completed By: Jacqueline Brooks

Date: April 29, 2023

4. 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? X <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Transfer Credit Policy (Website)	If so, is the policy publicly available? X <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where?
The Admissions Committee reviews requests for Transcripts during the Admissions process, as well as once the student has been admitted for students who after the admissions process request to receive credits for courses taken at other graduate schools.	Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? X <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	<p>Comments:</p> <p>Meridian University has a transfer credit policy that allows students to transfer up to 40 quarter credits for the PsyD, PhD, and EdD, and 12 quarter credits towards Master's degrees. However, there are a few criteria that must be met in order for transfer credits to be granted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The course must have been taken at a state approved or regionally accredited institution and be listed on an official transcript. • The student must have received a grade of a "B" or higher in the course. • Transfer credit can only be potentially available for graduate level coursework. <p>To request credit for coursework taken at other institutions, students must submit the syllabus for the course (the actual syllabus from when the course was taken) along with an accompanying letter that clearly spells out which Meridian course(s) the student is requesting transfer credit for. The assessment of prior coursework submitted for transfer can take up to 20-30 working days.</p> <p>Meridian University does not accept credit earned through challenge examination and/or achievement tests. Meridian does not offer credit for experiential learning or independent study.</p> <p>Note regarding Veterans Benefits: Students who are eligible for VA Benefits must submit all educational history for transfer credit review prior to utilizing VA aid. VA aid cannot be used to pay for courses for which the student has received transfer credit and has therefore completed the associated program requirement(s). Credit cannot be given for prior military training.</p> <p>In addition to the above, Meridian University encourages students to take courses in sequence whenever possible. This is because the university's curriculum is designed to be taken in a specific order, and taking courses out of sequence can make it more difficult for students to succeed.</p>

*§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: Hector L. Sambolin, Jr.

Date: April 29, 2023

B. Distance Education Review

Institution: Meridian University

Type of Visit: Reaffirmation Visit

Name of reviewer/s: Anthony Lee

Date/s of review: 4/27/23

Section Completed: ☒ A OR ☐ B

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

SECTION A: Institutions with Approved Distance Education Programs

1. Programs and courses reviewed (please list)

Fall 2022-2023 Courses

PSY 770-0 Principles of Psychopharmacology

-PSY 770 is a Psychology elective that is required for students enrolled in the MA in Counseling Psychology, PsyD in Clinical Psychology, and PhD in Psychology degree programs who are seeking LPCC or Psychologist licensure.

PSY 743-0 Interacting with the Polypoetic Psyche: An Archetypal Approach

-PSY 743 is a Psychology elective.

MER 591-0 Writing Literature Reviews

-MER 591 is a core course which is therefore required for all students enrolled in the EdD in Organizational Leadership, PhD in Psychology, and PsyD in Clinical Psychology degree programs as part of the research writing curriculum. Because it is applicable across programs, it is numbered 'MER' rather than 'EDU', 'PSY', or 'MBA'.

2. Background Information (number of programs offered by distance education; degree levels; FTE enrollment in distance education courses/programs; history of offering

distance education; percentage growth in distance education offerings and enrollment; platform, formats, and/or delivery method)

- a. number of programs offered by distance education: **Seven**
- b. degree levels; **Master's and Doctoral**
- c. FTE enrollment in distance education courses/programs; **132**
- d. history of offering distance education; **Meridian began to offer courses taken via distance education eight years ago in the 2015-16 academic year. These offerings were subsequently increased over the next several years, to the point where Meridian had distinct online and onsite learning formats. Meridian's adaptation to the pandemic resulted in 100% of all course offerings being offered online beginning in 2020. Post-pandemic, University is returning to offering the option of onsite coursework to supplement online coursework; this option is voluntary for the student as all programs can be completed 100% online.**
- e. percentage growth in distance education offerings and enrollment; **All courses are now offered via the distance education format and all students take distance education courses, even those pursuing the hybrid learning format. Meridian does not have a 100% onsite learning format. Meridian's enrollment has grown at approximately 25% over the last year (2021-22 vs 2022-23).**
- f. platform, formats, and/or delivery method: **Courses are delivered via a customized LMS platform based on the open-source Moodle LMS and supplemented with additional features which includes video conferencing, audio calls, chat, and social groups. The academic year is structured on the quarter system; courses are organized via weekly modules over a 7-week period. The Meridian academic year involves four quarters a year of instruction, not three. Students enrolled full-time are enrolled in a full course load during the Summer Quarter. Each course includes a combination of long-form written assignments, weekly smaller assignments (required posts), reading assignments, six interactive live classes (students must watch the recording and submit a timely written assignment if they do not attend live), small group activities scheduled by students themselves (which students then write about via submitted assignments) and additional resources/quizzes/exams, depending on the course.**

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

The WSCUC Review Team met with faculty and staff during the Spring 2023 site visit. Prior to this, in Fall 2022 the Review Team received the Reaffirmation of Accreditation Institutional Report and related appendices, as well as additional documents provided per the Review Team's request via the Lines of Inquiry Summary after the off-site review. The appendices provided with the Institutional Report included example syllabi for each program, curriculum maps for each program, Rubrics for each ILO, and other academic evidence. Amongst the additional documents provided after the offsite review was a faculty roster which includes the names and educational credentials for each faculty member.

During the site visit the review team met with the Curriculum Committee, Student Development Committee, academic advisors, Scholarship Team/library staff, Assessment Team, Institutional Research Team, and Program Chairs.

The Institutional Report spoke to the University's use of a Student Engagement Update system to track student activity and engagement in courses, and this was also discussed during the site visit in interviews with multiple faculty and staff.

Prior to and during the site visit, the Review Team had access to three Fall 2022-2023 courses:

PSY 770-0 Principles of Psychopharmacology
 PSY 743-0 Interacting with the Polypoetic Psyche: An Archetypal Approach
 MER 591-0 Writing Literature Reviews

These courses were full examples of courses that students had taken. They included actual faculty/student interaction in writing and recordings of the live classes that took place.

During the site visit, the Review Team was given access to the University's Knowledge Base, which includes the Student Handbook and Online Learning Guidelines, as well as other student-facing documents.

Observations and Findings

Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	Follow-up Required (identify the issues)
<i>Fit with Mission.</i> How does the institution conceive of distance learning relative to its mission, operations, and administrative structure? How are distance education offerings planned, funded, and operationalized?	The Institutional Report and JEDI Plans identify the roles of distance education in reaching a diverse student body and generally reaching mission-aligned goals. It aligns with the focus on globalizing transformative learning. Distance learning allows the institution to meet a broader student population.	

	<p>The Review Team met with faculty and staff in which the experience of teaching and administering online courses was discussed. The Review Team also met with students who have been completing their degrees via online courses who were generally satisfied with the education received. The Review Team reviewed financial reports and budgeting documents that accounted for appropriate expenses such as staff and technology.</p>	
<p><i>Connection to the Institution.</i> How are distance education students integrated into the life and culture of the institution?</p>	<p>All courses are offered via distance education; The team received positive feedback from students who were happy with the educational experience at the institution. Discussions on the LMS and live class sessions allow students to get to know each other more well. Students cared deeply about having a transformative learning experience.</p>	
<p><i>Quality of the DE Infrastructure.</i> Are the learning platform and academic infrastructure of the institution conducive to learning and interaction between faculty and students and among students? Is the technology adequately supported? Are there back-ups?</p>	<p>The LMS used is Moodle, with additional features having been added to it (such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom). As a recognized LMS utilized in higher ed institutions, Moodle is conducive both for student learning and and for interaction between faculty and students.</p> <p>The University uses Microsoft Azure to host its learning platform as well as additional products offered by Salesforce and Microsoft. All infrastructure is cloud based.</p> <p>All student data is secured by Microsoft Azure Active Directory and Microsoft Azure. All student data is backed up from Salesforce to Azure or from Azure to redundant storage</p>	

<p><i>Student Support Services:</i> What is the institution's capacity for providing advising, counseling, library, computing services, academic support and other services appropriate to distance modality? What do data show about the effectiveness of the services?</p>	<p>The Review Team met with staff on the Student Services, Student Records, Financial Services, and Scholarship Teams. The Scholarship Team meeting included the University's librarian. The University's Institutional Report addressed improvements made to academic advising and other support services, and the Review Team met with the academic advisors during the site visit. During the site visit, the Review Team requested and was provided the latest data from student surveys reflecting student satisfaction but in conversations with students, there seems to be a delay in response time for additional support. The Review Team had some concerns about the limited number of hours per week that the librarian provides (15 hours) for a university that serves masters' and doctoral students.</p>	<p>Improvements in response time to student requests are needed to support students engaged in distance learning. A review of the new student advising model involving faculty is needed to ensure appropriate student support. In addition, graduate students would benefit from increased library services for research and writing services.</p>
<p><i>Faculty.</i> Who teaches the courses, e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct? Do they teach only online courses? In what ways does the institution ensure that distance learning faculty are oriented, supported, and integrated appropriately into the academic life of the institution? How are faculty involved in curriculum development and assessment of student learning? How are faculty trained and supported to teach in this modality?</p>	<p>The University has full-time and part-time core faculty as well as adjunct faculty. The University has a Faculty Services Team which implements a faculty onboarding process. Per the Institutional Report, the University's faculty attend Faculty Development Seminars, Faculty Council, and various committees as appropriate to their roles and responsibilities. Faculty assess students via the University's ARMS (Assessment and Rubric Management System) software as well as via the Quarterly Academic Review process which is led by the Student Development Committee, which is made up of faculty. The Review Team met with the Program Chairs, who along with the CAO serve as the Curriculum Committee. The University</p>	<p>Ongoing training for instructors in distance education pedagogy is needed.</p>

	has a Faculty Handbook and an Online Learning Guide. Faculty are responsible for developing and/or revising the courses they are teaching. New faculty are oriented through initial onboarding documents, meetings with Faculty Services, program chairs, and the CAO, and key documents such as the Faculty Handbook, Faculty Online Learning Guidelines.	
<i>Curriculum and Delivery.</i> Who designs the distance education programs and courses? How are they approved and evaluated? Are the programs and courses comparable in content, outcomes and quality to on-ground offerings? (Submit credit hour report.)	Meridian faculty design program curriculum and course content. The Faculty Responsibilities Framework is agreed to by each faculty who teaches a course. The Curriculum Committee is responsible for approving new courses. Faculty complete the Faculty Teaching Survey after each course, and students complete a Course Evaluation form. Course Evaluations address both faculty performance and course content. The University has a Credit Hour Policy which is published on its website. The University's Credit Hour Policy addresses how course content is reviewed via the Program Review process. The Review Team received the most recently completed Eight Year Program Review as well as the External Review conducted for that program. The University's online courses include the same learning outcomes as those taught on-ground. All courses exist as online courses and have been taught as online courses since at least 2020. All courses that were previously 10-week courses were revised to a seven-week format. Meridian University leadership indicated that each course maintained the same level of work in the 7-week format as the previous 10-week format, but the Review Team had	With the transition from 10 week to 7 week courses, there needs to be ongoing monitoring to ensure it meets the credit hour policy

	concerns that the 7-week format adheres to the credit-hour policy.	
<i>Faculty Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction.</i> How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for “faculty-initiated, regular and substantive interaction”? How is compliance monitored? What activities count as student/instructor substantive interaction”?	Meridian’s Faculty Services Team monitors faculty submission of the Student Engagement Update each week and monitors faculty written engagement in the learning platform. Faculty sign the Faculty Responsibilities Framework each quarter for each course they teach. The Faculty Services Team shares a report each week with the Curriculum Committee on the degree of faculty engagement for that week for each course. Faculty and students are held to minimum standards for written engagement via the Attendance Policy and Faculty Responsibilities Framework. Meridian courses include weekly writing activities that students must complete during that week. Faculty are verified by the Faculty Services Team to have responded to those assignments with substantive feedback as well as to have engaged substantively in discussion interaction with students. Additionally, faculty teach a live 60-75 minute course during six of the weeks, which they then take attendance for and track which students who did not attend watched the recording and completed a written assignment. This is addressed in the Student Handbook and assessed via the Student Engagement Update, Mid-Course Evaluation, weekly faculty engagement report, as well as other tools.	
<i>Academic Engagement.</i> How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for “Academic Engagement”? How is compliance	All courses have assigned textbooks and assignments established via the syllabus and courses page in the learning platform. Each course is approved by the University’s	

<p>monitored? What activities contribute to academic engagement?</p>	<p>Curriculum Committee and audited by the University's Faculty Services Team prior to the opening of each module against defined standards for completeness, including the volume of resources provided and the number and type of assignments for each week. Academic Engagement activities include written short essays which faculty respond to with questions and comments, research papers which receive formal faculty feedback, and small-group activities which students report-back on. Faculty provide students with Mid-Course Evaluation and final course grades. Course grades are reviewed by the Student Development Committee for alignment with the University's academic standards. Prior to publication, the Assessment Team compares draft course grades submitted by faculty to actual records of academic work in the learning platform to verify applicable work was completed.</p>	
<p><i>State Licensure Requirements.</i> Describe, as appropriate, the institution's process for disclosing to students how state licensure requirements are met by distance education programs, whether licensure requirements are not met by programs, or whether the institution has not determined where licensure requirements are met by the programs.</p>	<p>Meridian's website addresses both state licensure and state authorization for each program and the institution as a whole. Students in programs that can prepare them for one or multiple state licenses are provided with a Licensure Selection form at the time of enrollment where they can select which license(s) they are seeking. The University's degree audit system then shows students which requirements they must meet for the license(s) they have selected, including specific courses and types of fieldwork. The University's Student Success webpage publicly lists licensure exam pass rates for each exam. Access to the University's Fieldwork Handbook was</p>	

	provided during the site visit, which includes details of each license that each degree program is eligible for and instructions for seeking such licensure through educational eligibility. The University's Academic Catalog is provided to each student before enrollment, which also details state licensure requirements and eligibility.	
<p><i>Student Identification Verification and Privacy.</i> What is the institution's process for student verification, e.g., a secure login and pass code; proctored examinations; other technologies or practices that are effective in verifying student identification? What precautions are taken by the institution to protect technology from cyber security intrusions on its or outsourced systems? Are additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity disclosed at the time of registration or enrollment?</p>	<p>Every student provides a photo of themselves which is stored in their student record and added to the learning platform, where it is visible to each student and faculty they interact with. Each US based student provides their social security number at the time of enrollment as well as legal name, phone number, and address details. There are no charges to students for identity and access management services or technology. During enrollment, each student has a video call with a member of the Student Services Team and separately with their Academic Advisor. Students are also required to have their webcams enabled during live Zoom classes, which is addressed in the Student Handbook. The University uses Microsoft Azure Active Directory, which provides each student with a logic username and password. The Microsoft Azure Active Directory system requires each student, faculty, and staff to setup a second authentication factor (Multi-Factor Authentication). The University's organizational chart identifies the members of the IT Services Team. This team conducts monthly and quarterly cybersecurity audits, intrusion testing, and reporting on the Microsoft Security Score for the University..</p>	

<p><i>Retention and Graduation.</i> What data on retention and graduation are collected on students taking online courses and programs? What do these data show? What disparities are evident? Are rates comparable to on-ground programs and to other institutions' online offerings? If any concerns exist, how are these being addressed?</p>	<p>The University tracks graduation, retention, and other student success metrics and publishes them on the public Student Success webpage. The Review Team was also provided with the University's internal Assessment Dashboard as well as other data analytics tools that the University uses to track student success metrics. The last three years have not included any on-ground instruction, so the University's faculty and staff are fully focused on achieving positive student outcomes in the context of distance education. Retention rates and graduation rates remain strong year over year. Data disaggregated by ethnicity and age ranges are relatively steady across groups.</p>	<p>Further disaggregation of data and follow-up action items to improve outcomes for specific weaker groups are needed.</p>
<p><i>Student Learning.</i> How does the institution assess student learning for online programs and courses? Is this process comparable to that used in on-ground courses? What are the results of student learning assessment? How do these compare with learning results of on-ground students, if applicable, or with other online offerings?</p>	<p>Meridian has offered solely distance learning programs the last 3 years. Students receive Mid-Course Evaluations in writing from faculty as well as course grades and feedback in the case of non-pass grades and low-pass grades. Faculty assess student work against Program Learning Outcomes via end-of-quarter assessment scoring. The university uses the Assessment and Rubric Management System (ARMS) to assess learning outcomes. The data shows results that learning outcomes are generally at the proficient level (3.0) across programs.</p>	

<p><i>Contracts with Vendors.</i> Are there any arrangements with outside vendors concerning the infrastructure, delivery, development, or instruction of courses? If so, do these comport with the policy on <i>Agreements with Unaccredited Entities</i>?</p>	<p>There are no arrangements with outside vendors.</p>	
<p><i>Quality Assurance Processes:</i> How are the institution's quality assurance processes designed or modified to cover distance education? What evidence is provided that distance education programs and courses are educationally effective?</p>	<p>The University's Institutional Research Team collects data that is used for annual and multi-year program review, quarterly reporting of survey data, weekly reporting of student engagement, faculty engagement, and other metrics, as well as other quality assurance processes. The Review Team was provided with the University's "IR Table of Contents" document as well as its Program Review Handbook. Educational effectiveness is reflected in the Alumni Survey data collected, Student Success webpage and associated metrics, and External Program Review completed during 2022-23 and provided to the Review Team. Evidence provided showed programs and courses are educationally effective.</p>	

