

Program Review Self-Study Report
Dharma Realm Buddhist University
Master of Arts in Buddhist Classics
Prepared by the Program Review Committee
July 2017

Section One: Introduction, Context, and Mission Alignment

(Please refer to [Attachment 1.5](#) Self-Study Report Template for suggested prompts to this section)

A. Brief History of DRBU's MA in Buddhist Classics Program

The Master of Arts in Buddhist Classics is one of two degree programs DRBU currently offers. In 2010, DRBU began a multi-year self-study to 1) reaffirm and interpret the University's mission and to lay out a roadmap that DRBU will follow in realizing its long-term educational vision, 2) develop a strategy to broaden its reach to a more diverse set of students, and 3) consider pursuing regional accreditation. The creation of the two degree programs dovetailed with the process of reaffirming and interpreting DRBU's mission: the mission drives and informs formulation and adoption of the programs' high-level design principles, while the process of fleshing out details about the programs clarifies certain aspects of the mission that might have been overlooked.

Besides the rephrased mission and the institutional learning outcomes, creation of these two programs was the primary output of the 2010 self-study process and much, if not all, of DRBU's activities and organizations are structured to align with and support the programs. Here are several relevant examples from the academic program review:

- The two degree programs use a variation of a model commonly referred to as “Great Books,” and share the following features with other “Great Books” programs:
 - An all-required and sequenced curriculum that consists of a series of classical primary texts
 - A discussion-centered pedagogy that eschews lectures given by teaching faculty acting as academic specialists.
- A single teaching faculty whose primary responsibility is teaching in the two programs, with the understanding that:
 - Professors will teach across the curriculum
 - Professors are not organized by department, specialty, or program
 - Professors are not required to take on conventional academic research; currently, they are encouraged to engage in scholarship activities such as publishing and presenting on the nature and benefits of DRBU's programs.
- Teaching faculty participates in significant ways in DRBU's governance:
 - Professors and senior administrators collectively form the faculty at DRBU that makes high-level policy decisions affecting the University
 - As part of the faculty, professors participate in the review and appointment of the president and the appointment of the Dean of Academics
 - Professors have collective and sole oversight over all matters related to

instruction.

In short, the MA program in Buddhist Classics is one of only two programs DRBU offers, and lies at the core of the University’s operation. The program is not part of a separate academic department, and because it has an all-required and sequentially-built curriculum, offers no choice of major or concentration.

DRBU concluded its 2010 Self-Study in 2013 and subsequently prepared to launch the two degree programs. In May 2013, the MA in Buddhist Classics (along with the BA in Liberal Arts) was approved by the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education. In December 2013, DRBU was granted eligibility to pursue WSCUC Candidacy and Initial Accreditation by the WSCUC Eligibility Review Committee (ERC) (see [Attachment 1.1](#), Letter from ERC Granting Eligibility). In July 2016, after a WSCUC site visit, the Commission granted DRBU the Candidacy Status to continue its pursuit of Initial Accreditation (see [Attachment 1.2](#) for WSCUC Team Report and [Attachment 1.3](#) for WSCUC Action Letter). In fall of 2013, DRBU matriculated its first MA cohort. Three cohorts have completed their MA degrees as of May 2017.

The two new degree programs supplanted six BPPE-approved legacy programs, several of which DRBU had operated since its inception in 1976. The “sunsetting” of these six legacy programs was completed in 2015.

B. Program Descriptions

The MA program is described in detail in the DRBU Catalog (see [Attachment 1.4](#)) and [website](#). In short, the MA program’s all-required curriculum weaves together four strands of courses: Buddhist Texts, Comparative Hermeneutics, Buddhist Hermeneutics, and Language Tutorials. Spread over two years and a minimum of 39 units, the program is designed to expose students to key ideas and issues from within the Buddhist philosophical tradition as conveyed through its rich and diverse collected works.

The mission statement of DRBU, formally adopted in 2013 after the self-study, is as follows:

Dharma Realm Buddhist University is a community dedicated to liberal education in the broad Buddhist tradition—a tradition characterized by knowledge in the arts and sciences, self-cultivation, and the pursuit of wisdom. Its pedagogical aim is thus twofold: to convey knowledge and to activate an intrinsic wisdom possessed by all individuals. Developing this inherent capacity requires an orientation toward learning that is dialogical, interactive, probing, and deeply self-reflective. Such education makes one free in the deepest sense and opens the opportunity to pursue the highest goals of human existence.

The University’s institutional learning outcomes (ILO) and MA program learning outcomes (PLO) stem from the mission statement:

ILO

PLO

ILO 1: A liberally educated person will develop and practice skills for lifelong learning, which encompass sound judgment; the flexibility to constantly assess evolving internal and external conditions; and accordingly, the ability to reconsider, adjust, alter, or even abandon his or her course or stance.

PLO 1: Exercise ethical sensibility.

ILO 2: A liberally educated person will appreciate the methods of inquiry and insights suggested by the primary texts, particularly in the study of human nature, the workings of causality, and the complex interconnections among the personal, the social, and the natural worlds.

PLO 2: Assess and articulate major Buddhist methods and practices.

PLO 3: Explain insights gained from close reading of texts and their contemporary implications for the personal, the social, and the natural worlds.

ILO 3: A liberally educated person will communicate in a clear, nuanced, candid, and skillful manner.

PLO 4: Create sustained, coherent expositions and reflections for both general and specialized audiences.

Overall, the program’s most important contribution is in bolstering students’ ability to inquire—even about the nature of inquiry itself and the role of one’s self plays in it. In honing and exercising such ability throughout a lifetime, they can increasingly tap into an “inherent wisdom possessed by all,” allowing them to see clearly and be free from the constraints and limitations that result from distorted, obscured, and imperfect vision.

DRBU also believes that, as one of less than a handful of “Great Books” style MA programs in the U.S., the MA in Buddhist Classics adds to the diversity of programs devoted to the study of Buddhism. In addition, the emphasis on primary texts and hermeneutics underscores the program’s attempt to study Buddhist texts “the Buddhist way.” In the program, professors and students read Buddhist texts not primarily through the lenses of other disciplines such as history, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, art history, literature, religious studies, and area studies, but within Buddhist paradigms and using Buddhist hermeneutical tools.

Finally, the program’s attempt to integrate contemplative or contemplative exercises with reading of primary texts offers students a unique learning experience. An important category of Buddhist hermeneutical tools that the MA program explores as part of an integrated curriculum is contemplative exercises, which are described in and contribute to the learning of Buddhist texts. These distinct features further distinguish DRBU from and make it an interesting alternative to traditional programs devoted to the study of Buddhism.

The WSCUC SAV 1 Visiting Team was generous in its affirmation of DRBU and its programs: “DRBU has much to offer higher education as in its core educational programs, it is demonstrating how a university can advance its mission and serve its communities on campus and well beyond. It offers a model of education that adds to the rich diversity of US higher education.”

List of Attached Evidence for Section One:

- 1.1 [Letter from ERC Granting Eligibility](#)
- 1.2 [WSCUC SAV 1 Visiting Team Report](#)
- 1.3 [Commission Action Letter, Seeking Accreditation Visit 1, June 2016 Action](#)
- 1.4 [Excerpt from Catalog - MA Program Description](#)
- 1.5 [DRBU Academic Program Review Self-Study Report Template](#)

Section Two: Response to Recommendations From Previous Review

(Please refer to [Attachment 1.5](#) Self-Study Report Template for suggested prompts to this section)

DRBU is formally conducting an academic program review on the MA in Buddhist Classics program for the first time (see [Attachment 2.1](#) for DRBU's program review process), and therefore, there are no recommendations from the previous cycle to respond to at this time.

However, DRBU has undergone two WSCUC accreditation reviews. [Attachment 2.2](#), an excerpt of DRBU's 2016 WSCUC SAV 1 Report, is DRBU's response to issues identified by the WSCUC Eligibility Review Committee in its 2013 Action Letter ([Attachment 1.1](#)). [Attachment 2.3](#) is an excerpt from the 2017 DRBU's WSCUC SAV 2 Report that contains responses to the recommendations listed in the July 2016 WSCUC Action Letter ([Attachment 1.3](#)).

Though DRBU has developed a program review process and had plans to conduct one for the MA program in 2018-2019, the University elected to perform this current review one year early, in response to WSCUC's recommendation in its 2016 Action Letter ([Attachment 1.3](#)).

List of Attached Evidences for Section Two:

- 2.1 [DRBU Program Review Handbook](#)
- 2.2 [Response to WSCUC ERC's 2013 Recommendations](#)
- 2.3 [Response to 2016 WSCUC Action Letter Recommendations](#)

Section Three. Effective Student Learning

(Please refer to [Attachment 1.5](#) Self-Study Report Template for suggested prompts to this section)

Integration of curriculum, pedagogy, and learning outcomes

Reaffirming the mission and pursuing regional accreditation were two of the main driving forces behind DRBU's wide-ranging 2010-2013 Self Study. Therefore, drafting program learning outcomes (PLOs) that are aligned with the mission, constructing the curriculum, and adopting the pedagogy were all integral parts of the MA program's design process. This strong connection was sufficiently evident to and noted by the WSCUC SAV1 reviewers: "From the outset, DRBU is poised to create an outcome-based curricula for the two new degrees." (See pg 12 [Attachment 1.2.](#))

The [Mission and Educational Objectives page](#) of the DRBU website contains an essay that describes the integration between the mission, the learning outcomes, and the programs' curriculum and pedagogy. To ensure coverage of the PLOs across the integrated curriculum, the teaching faculty created a curriculum map for the MA program (see [Attachment 3.1](#)) as part of an outcome assessment framework (see [Attachment 3.2](#)).

Because the teaching faculty has collective oversight over the entire program, professors meet each semester to review syllabi, which includes the reading list, the PLOs correspondence to the course according to the curriculum map, the course outcomes, and the grading policy (see [Attachment 3.3](#) for sample syllabi from the program). Further, because the program has a common curriculum, any revision to the curriculum requires the teaching faculty's collective approval (see a subsequent section describing DRBU's process to revise the curriculum).

Course sequencing and availability

The MA program in Buddhist Classics has an all-required and sequentially built curriculum, similar to other "Great Books"-style degree programs. Students, grouped in cohorts, progress through the two-year program according to a designated sequence (see [Attachment 1.4](#) for the program sequence). A single cohort of fewer than ten students has matriculated in each of four incoming classes since the program's launch in 2013. DRBU has offered and will continue to offer all courses in the program in any given academic year, with the exception of second-year courses in the language strands.

Students are required to take only one year of either Classical Chinese or Sanskrit. The choice to continue into second-year language courses resides with each student. If insufficient interest exist for either or both second-year Classical Chinese or Sanskrit in a given year, the program will not offer them.

Because fall and spring courses are always taught in their respective semesters, and students are required to take courses in the program's designated sequence, students who are unable to complete a course will have to wait a year for the opportunity to take it again. Under this scenario, these students' time-to-degree will be lengthened by at least one year. Students can complete the two-semester requirement in the language strand in either of the two years of the program.

External review and comparison of the program

The MA program has been reviewed by external reviewers, namely the WSCUC Eligibility Review Committee in 2013 and the WSCUC SAV1 Visiting Team in 2016. Several of the reviewers on the Eligibility Review Committee and the SAV1 visiting team are from institutions that are similar in some ways to DRBU: for example, with relatively small enrollment, liberal arts degree programs, or affiliation with a Buddhist organization. However, DRBU's MA program has not been reviewed by members of the teaching faculty or administrators from other “Great Books” colleges or programs, with which DRBU shares the most features.

In the process of creating the MA in Buddhist Classics and the BA in Liberal Arts, DRBU studied and consulted with four peer institutions—[Thomas Aquinas College](#) (California), [Shimer College](#) (Illinois), the [Integral Program](#) at St. Mary's College of California, and [St. John's College](#) (in Maryland and New Mexico). All of these offer a four-year undergraduate liberal arts program based on the study of classical texts. St. John's College (SJC) has an additional graduate institution, which offers degrees in Western liberal arts as well as in Eastern classics. DRBU faculty read extensive materials provided by these institutions, conducted interviews with their faculty and staff, and visited St. John's College in New Mexico and the two peer colleges located in California.

Best practices from these distinguished peers—in areas such as program layout, number of units, text selection criteria, pedagogy and teaching methods, student academic preparation, difficulty of materials, pace of reading, and evaluation and feedback methods—were taken into consideration by DRBU professors in designing and carrying out the two new programs.

On the question of how DRBU's two programs compare with those of their peers, the 2016 WSCUC SAV1 reviewers seem to agree with DRBU's assertion:

“While the content of DRBU's two new degree programs is distinct from that offered [by its peer institutions]...the structure and design of DRBU's programs are largely similar to those of these peer institutions. The names of the degrees, length of the programs, number of credit hours, type and frequency of student course work, classroom methodology, and level of student access to and interaction with the faculty are all highly comparable.”

SJC's Eastern Classics MA program is likely the closest comparison to DRBU's MA in Buddhist Classics. DRBU professors look forward to having a rich exchange with SJC's Dr. Michael Wolfe and to conducting a more detailed comparison of the two institutions' respective MA programs when he visits in early fall as one of the external reviewers for the program review.

Process for revising the curriculum

The Faculty Governance Manual ([Attachment 3.4](#)) stipulates that only professors may vote on instructional matters during the faculty meetings ([Attachment 3.5](#)) and that “[working] collectively to organize and determine all instructional matters such as content, methods of teaching, learning objectives, and methods of evaluation and assessment” is one of the primary responsibilities of the professors ([Attachment 3.6](#)). Section five of the Governance Manual also

outlines a process by which the professors may revise the MA and the BA curricula ([Attachment 3.7](#)).

In short, every year, the Dean of Academics and the Instruction Committee solicit written proposals from the professors to revise the MA curriculum. The Dean and the Committee then select from the proposals ones to be considered by the teaching faculty at the next faculty meeting. This selection includes any proposal requested by the President or any five professors.

During the meeting, if no professor holds onto a serious objection over a proposal, then the proposal will be implemented. If one or more professors maintain their objections after discussions of a proposal, they are invited to share their objections in writing to all the professors. Then at the next faculty meeting, the proposal will be submitted for a simple-majority decision of all the professors.

Since the MA program’s launch, the teaching faculty has not used the process to revise the curriculum (though it has done so for the BA program).

Co-curricular learning opportunities

Organized through a Committee on Co-curricular Programs and Activities consisting of faculty and staff members, the University offers co-curricular programs and activities to both MA and BA students, as well as the larger DRBU community. The committee was formed in August 2015 with the following mission:

Co-Curricular events extend learning outside the classroom, complementing DRBU’s academic programs with activities in contemporary issues and scholarship. These activities aim to build community and raise awareness of global issues in ethics, politics, spirituality, culture, and the environment, with a goal to inspire and broaden discussions around DRBU’s academic programs. The juxtaposition of the classical texts and the co-curricular activities mutually illuminate the curriculum and these contemporary issues.

The committee has offered a total of 15 programs since 2015:

Fall 2015	Dr. Srikant Bahulkar, “Buddhist Narrative Literature”
	Rev. Heng Sure and Ven. Ming Hai, “Chinese Chan and Western Zen”
	<i>Century of the Self</i> screening and discussion
Spring 2016	Ethics and the Environment (five-week forum)
	Dr. Osmund Boppearachchi, “The Life of Gautama Buddha as Depicted in Ancient Indian Art”
	Dr. Snjezana Akpinar, “What Is Doxography?”
	Ajahn Pasanno, “The Interrelationship of Mettā, Vipassanā, & Samatha and their Practices”

Fall 2016	Dr. Ganesh Umakant Thite, “Introduction to the Vedas”
	Carol Ruth Silver and Marion Kwan, “Civic Engagement for Humanity: Lessons from Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement Applied to Modern Times”
	Dr. Ron Epstein, “Harmonious Relationship as Buddhist Practice”
Spring 2017	David Wong, “Guqin: Music of Ancient Chinese Scholars”
	Clare Ronzani, “Thomas Merton and Meditation”
	Bhikkhu Bodhi, question and answer session
	<i>Teach Me To Be Wild</i> screening and discussion
	Dr. Stephen Wilcox, “Creating a Native Western Buddhist Liturgy: A Dialogue”

The committee began to explore ways to collect useful data for assessment of co-curricular programs and activities. A recently prepared co-curricular program review self-study report (see [Attachment 3.8](#)) has a more detailed discussion of assessment methodology and findings, as well as recommendations and plans for improving co-curricular programs and activities at DRBU.

The committee is aware that other colleges and universities use the “co-curricular” label to designate a wide range of programs and activities and many institutions develop PLOs for co-curricular program separately from the degree programs. This practice has obvious advantages: 1) categorizing non-academic programs under the “co-curricular” designation highlights these programs’ purpose of supporting students’ advances in DRBU’s institutional learning outcomes, and 2) having separate PLOs from the degree programs allows these programs to identify and develop outcomes not limited to those most suitably demonstrated in the classroom setting. The Committee on Co-curricular Programs and Activities will explore adopting this practice in the upcoming academic year.

DRBU offers service scholarships as part of its aid package to all students who need financial assistance to attend. Students in the service scholarship program work up to 13 hours a week under supervision in a variety of jobs on campus. Currently, it’s not operating as a co-curricular program.

The MA program does not currently offer study abroad opportunities to its students. However, DRBU has recently (November 2016) signed sister institution agreements with two Taiwanese institutions— [Huafan University](#) and [Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts](#)—and has begun to explore potential study abroad programs for both BA and MA students. Because of the MA program’s all-required curriculum and therefore no-credit-transfer policy (see the discussion on admission in Section Five), intersession programs such as summer language intensives have a higher likelihood of being established first.

Opportunities to participate in Buddhist practices such as meditation and chanting are available

to students on campus. The MA program has a contemplative exercise component that is integrated with the curriculum and therefore not considered a co-curricular activity.

The MA program does not offer credit for out-of-class learning experience.

contemplative exercise component of the curriculum

Liberal education at DRBU is based on the belief that students possess an inherent capacity for wisdom. Central to DRBU's pedagogy is the aim to activate the students' knowing for and through themselves.

The seminal texts of both Eastern and Western traditions come embedded with sophisticated methods for deep questioning, testing, and affirming. These methods sometimes take the form of "contemplative exercises"—exercises designed to be probing, engaging, and deeply self-reflective. Their aim is to promote close listening to oneself and bolster a confidence that comes from self-discovery and direct knowing for oneself. The contemplative exercises at DRBU are presented as techniques, immersion exercises, and catalysts for inner development, evoking and honing modalities and sensibilities that can shed light on the texts and potentially broaden our ways of knowing.

The development of the contemplative exercises curriculum has taken on two phases. In the initial phase, professors are invited to brainstorm and try out individual contemplative exercises in the classroom that complement the courses they are teaching. The criteria for this first phase is the integration of contemplative exercises with the primary texts presented in the curriculum. In the second phase, professors come together as a faculty to evaluate the integration of the contemplative exercises curriculum on a program level and assess the overall student learning experience over the two or four years. Student feedback is incorporated into the planning process in the second phase. The criteria here is the diversity and richness of student learning and the alignment with institutional and program level learning outcomes.

DRBU has implemented the first phase in the development of the contemplative exercises curriculum. The professors have explored different ways to integrate contemplative exercises into their individual courses. For example, in the first-year MA Buddhist Texts course, a three-day recitation retreat was incorporated into the course. Students were asked to record any observations, questions, insights, challenges, and reflections that emerged from the contemplative experience. Specifically, students were invited to draw connections between the passages from the primary text they were reading and their own experiences, discoveries, and struggles in the recitation hall. After the retreat, students wrote a reflection paper and shared their experience in the seminar.

Student feedback and suggestions on their contemplative exercise experience were gathered in the end-of-semester survey. This year, the Student Survey showed that 100% of the respondents agreed that contemplative exercises had informed and enhanced their intellectual inquiry. Also, comments left by students in the survey showed a strong need for an expansion and deeper integration of contemplative exercises across the curriculum.

The teaching faculty faces several challenges in developing and implementing the contemplative exercise component in this component's early years of development:

- Improving assessment method: the teaching faculty has assigned reflection papers on the experience, but are there are other ways to assess student learning in the component? How can the prompts for reflection papers be improved?
- Proportion of time: students overwhelmingly request more time for the contemplative exercise component. However, more hours in the component will come at the expense of seminar hours inside the classroom. What's the balance? A higher proportion of time for the component also means that the program needs to increase the level of learning. How can that be achieved? How can the results be assessed?
- Teaching faculty training: How does the program provide training for professors inexperienced in these exercises so they can lead courses that contain this component?

The teaching faculty will continue to devote time and resources to improving and refining the contemplative exercise component.

Differentiation from BA program

While DRBU's MA and BA programs share the same discussion-driven pedagogy and reliance on primary texts, the MA in Buddhist Classics differs from the BA in Liberal Arts in three major ways.

First, the MA program focuses on and aims to deepen the investigation of Buddhist texts. Second, the question of interpretation and meaning, which is central to both programs at DRBU, comes to the fore in the MA program: Students examine major methodological approaches to the theory and practice of interpreting texts and human experience from outside and within the broad Buddhist traditions in the program's two strands on hermeneutics (Buddhist and Comparative). Finally, DRBU's professors developed the MA PLOs to be more advanced than the BA PLOs, and appropriate for an MA degree in the humanities.

Ethical sensibility (PLO 1) is an important intellectual skill that corresponds to ILO 1. Aligned with ILO 2, PLO 2 and PLO 3 demand that students demonstrate a level of proficiency in the content knowledge and methods of inquiry presented in a curriculum centered on Buddhist texts. Fulfillment of these two PLOs additionally requires students to skillfully explain these methods of inquiry and knowledge to others while paying attention to the contemporary context.

Similar to the BA program, the MA program values writing as a skill and challenges students to develop their voice as writers and hone their messages according to different audiences, including those with specialized field knowledge in areas related to the study of Buddhism.

Even though the MA PLOs may seem to address the same types of skills as the BA PLOs, they are different in several ways. For example, DRBU professors phrase the MA outcomes using words that represent higher levels of skills; for example, "ethical sensibility" (MA) versus "ethical awareness" (BA).

Do students understand the program’s model and philosophy?

The MA degree is a new program offered by a not-yet-accredited university—a combination that presents significant challenges when it comes to recruiting students. Self-selection on the part of prospective students is an important factor. DRBU’s recruiting and admissions staff spend more time than those of established institutions interacting with prospective students, in order to explain this somewhat unique program. Thus far, all the admitted students were interviewed during the admission process, and virtually all of them visited the campus before being admitted.

During orientation for new students, professors lead workshops that introduce the program’s educational model, philosophy, and pedagogy, and students gradually acclimate to this different learning style throughout their first months at the program.

The Program Review Committee conducted a qualitative analysis of student conference reports/exit interviews of 12 students (out of 13) from the Class of 2016 and Class of 2017. In these interviews, 83% of the students shared their understanding and appreciation of the educational model. Student feedback is summarized in the table below, clustered around two major features of the educational model at DRBU.

Table 3.A

Feature 1: all-required and sequenced curriculum that comprises a series of classical primary texts	Feature 2: discussion-based instruction/shared inquiry.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The primary texts serve as the basic structure and solid foundation for this program and students' future learning. ● The sequence/progression of the program is well designed in terms of content and workload. Also, all classes are interrelated and interwoven. ● From the great thinkers of both Eastern and Western traditions, these texts help students to examine the basic assumptions that they bring to the program, which helps to open them up to new understanding and insights of the texts and themselves. ● Some have gained confidence to use these primary texts to handle everyday situations. There is a strong interest in applying and embodying the principles they have learned from these texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students have benefited greatly from the different lenses and perspectives that teachers and their peers bring to the classroom—the “cohort wisdom”. ● Students have learned to develop open-mindedness and open-heartedness towards different opinions. ● Having studied within a group of people with diverse backgrounds for two years, some have learned to create thoughtful responses according to their audience. ● When neither the text, the teacher, nor the student alone can presume to be the final authority, students are more active and engaged in their learning.

B. Student Learning & Success

(Please refer to [Attachment 1.5](#) Self-Study Report Template for suggested prompts to this section)

DRBU professors' collective oversight of instruction at DRBU extends to the activities of student learning outcome assessment, an important practice that helps to ensure the integrity of DRBU degrees. Assessment at DRBU takes the form of a set of instruction-related exercises and processes carried out in the spirit of self-reflection, to gauge the University's success at facilitating students' development toward the educational objectives laid out in its mission. Given such understanding, assessment is an ongoing process that engages both teaching faculty and students and is enmeshed in many of DRBU's core instructional practices and activities.

Examples of these embedded assessment practices include close monitoring of student progress facilitated by the programs' small, discussion-centric classes; exchanges and collaborations between professors encouraged by their collective oversight over the curricula and the curricula's integrated nature; and good channels for regular bi-directional feedback between students and professors. These channels are exemplified by DRBU's semesterly student conferences, during which each student's professors get together with the student to discuss his or her progress in learning and invite the student to reflect and respond. The WSCUC SAVI Visiting Team reported discovering a richness of records of these student conferences, "which contain feedback from instructors about each student's coursework during the semester."

In addition to these embedded activities and practices, DRBU's assessment framework includes several elements aimed at providing structures and formal occasions for the institution's self-reflection. These elements include student learning outcomes, the curriculum map, the assessment cycle, different types of assessment activities, and the assessment methodology (see [Attachment 3.2](#) for a detailed description of DRBU's outcome assessment framework).

2013-2015: Initial implementation

DRBU began implementing the assessment framework at the same time as the launch of the new MA degree in Fall 2013, and the teaching faculty carried out the first summative assessment exercise of the program in August 2015, using works of the first MA graduates from the Class of 2015. This exercise included comparing students' final works to some of their first works at DRBU across the four PLOs.

The initial efforts to implement the assessment framework focused on the following areas:

- Improving the outcome assessment framework. The teaching faculty and the Office of Academic Affairs piloted different parts of the framework in order to tease out potential issues and identify areas for improvement. The framework was improved in the following ways:
 - Refining the PLOs. For the MA program, one MA PLO was removed, and one MA PLO was rephrased.
 - Improving measurability of learning outcomes. DRBU responded to the WSCUC ERC's recommendation by constructing and refining rubrics for the MA (and BA) program's PLOs. Rubrics help to define levels of achievement or performance for corresponding PLOs and lead to consistency of scoring student works among

professors, and provide more detailed information on the progress of student learning. (See [Attachment 3.14](#) for rubrics for MA PLOs)

- Adding calibration to the assessment process. Calibration improves the precision and efficiency of assessment results, as professors can also divide up student work to score separately after an initial exercise of calibration.
- Setting the standards of performance. The teaching faculty has collective oversight over all matters related to instruction at DRBU, including setting the standards of performance for student learning. A result of the first summative assessment exercise in 2015 is that professors agreed on a more holistic sense of the standards of performance required for graduation in the MA program. A student's work from the time period close to graduation should provide sufficient evidence to score mostly "threes" across all dimensions of the four PLOs' rubrics.
- Introducing outcome assessment to teaching faculty. Engaging all professors in assessment exercises during regular professors' meetings and semesterly assessment workshops help them gain familiarity with the purposes, processes, and terminology of outcome assessment.

Results and findings of 2013-2015 outcome assessment

Overall, the first cohort of MA students graduated at the level expected (mostly with threes) on the PLO rubrics. The scores for different dimensions of the four rubrics range from two to four.

Because of the small sample size, the analyses of the class of 2015's summative assessments were primarily qualitative. The progress these four graduates made was evident in this comparison of works from their first semester with works from their final semester. The most noticeable areas of growth were under PLO 3 "explain insights gained from close reading of texts" and PLO4 "compose coherent and sustained narratives and reflections for [different] audiences." Professors also noted that even with several revisions of the rubrics, it was still difficult to find evidence in these student works to score the rubrics for PLO 1 "exercise ethical sensibility."

In addition to the difficulty of finding evidence for PLO 1, these initial implementations of outcome assessment surfaced the following areas needing improvement:

- Efficiency of outcome assessment processes. In the first two years of the MA program, professors collectively read virtually all of the written works by MA students, as evidence for outcome assessment. This coverage was possible because of low student enrollment, and perhaps even desirable because the curriculum and the assessment framework itself still required close scrutiny and troubleshooting. However, as student enrollment grows, the teaching faculty and the Office of Academic Affairs need to develop a set of efficient practices to sustainably perform outcome assessment.
- Systematic methods for gathering, warehousing, and distributing evidence and results of assessment. Both qualitative and quantitative evidence and results of assessment exercises, including student works, survey results, scores on outcome rubrics, quantitative and qualitative analyses, and action items require careful and consistent collection and

warehousing. These results also need to be organized, published, and circulated throughout the DRBU community. Appropriate warehousing of qualitative and quantitative data and results of and from assessment exercises will assist DRBU's future efforts at benchmarking standards of performance against external data, as well as in comparing student performance against its own historical data.

DRBU's efforts in ensuring student success, including its outcome assessment framework, received positive feedback from reviewers on the 2016 WSCUC SAVI Visiting Team. The team found DRBU to be "ever mindful of student learning and success," leading to a "commitment to creating a culture of evidence-based assessment dedicated to student achievement and quality assurance." With regard to the assessment framework, the team believed that DRBU has demonstrated that its "learning outcome assessment is substantially developed, sustainable, and effective."

The team echoes DRBU's own recommendations to work to improve the efficiency and scalability of its outcome assessment processes with a focus on strengthening the University's capacity to gather, warehouse, and distribute qualitative and quantitative evidence. While significant improvements in these areas will take time and careful planning, DRBU has taken initial steps since the last visit.

2017 assessment: incremental improvements

The first improvement to the framework implement by the Program Review Committee is a refinement of the procedure for the January 2017 outcome assessment workshop. Previously, scoring student works against outcome rubrics and analyzing the results were undertaken by all the professors. As a group, faculty members either read all papers of all students or all papers of some students. For this iteration, a small group of five readers was tasked with scoring student papers and analyzing the results (instead of the entire teaching faculty). The work of each student was read by two readers and scored using the existing rubrics for each of the four PLOs.

Before each reader began to read and score rubrics against sample student works, they used a calibration exercise as a basis for setting common expectations among them. The readers then gathered to discuss scoring results and to note any patterns, strengths, and/or concerns revealed by the assessment, as well as to propose action items. The teaching faculty then met as a whole to go over the results with the Program Review Committee members, prioritize concerns, and adopt action items.

Second, DRBU improved its capacity to gather and analyze qualitative and quantitative evidence. This was achieved mainly through addition of a staff member who is an experienced institutional researcher specializing in education research methods and quantitative analysis. The new staff member's expertise in improving evidence-gathering instruments (such as surveys for indirect assessment), data analysis, and presentation of quantitative results are an asset to DRBU's ongoing quality assurance processes, such as outcome assessment and program review.

Lastly, the Program Review Committee developed a template for writing the report for the semesterly assessment workshop, which will help to standardize the documentation and

circulation of DRBU's assessment work.

2017 assessment workshop findings and recommendations

The results of the January 2017 assessment workshop show that the first two cohort of MA students (classes of 2015 and 2016) graduated at the level expected (mostly with 3s) on the PLO rubrics. With the exception of PLO 1, both cohorts also showed progress in the learning outcomes between their first and final semesters in the program. This exercise surfaced again the difficulty professors face in assessing student learning with regard to PLO 1 (exercise ethical sensibility).

[Attachment 3.9](#) is the full report from the assessment workshop, which contains descriptions of the assessment method and process, qualitative and quantitative analyses and findings, and action items. In summary:

- Issues related to instruction:
 - All the students whose papers were sampled show progress, some significant, across various intellectual skills spanned by the PLOs (again, with the exception of PLO 1, which was difficult to assess). The report highlighted several specific areas of student growth: engaging in more complex ideas and connections; teasing out broader implications; synthesizing more worldviews; and writing in a more original fashion.
 - Although the rubrics scores of these papers show that students also made progress in PLO 4 (create sustained, coherent expositions and reflections for both general and specialized audiences), several readers felt that the progress lagged in comparison to other PLOs: “as the students increased their capacity for insight, it became harder for them to express their insights proportionally well.” Also, two readers noticed that papers seemed to be better written for a particular class (Comparative Hermeneutics).
 - The readers speculated that other factors, such as wide variation between the prompts for writing different papers, and end-of-semester fatigue, may have contributed to the unevenness of the quality of writing exhibited in the sample papers.
- The assessment framework:
 - The teaching faculty feels positive toward the improvement in the procedure to make outcome assessment more efficient than before.
 - The rubrics of the four PLOs contain a well-rounded set of attributes and skills. However, almost all the readers found many dimensions of the four rubrics difficult to assess objectively. Many standards proved to be verbose, poorly differentiated by level, and lacking clearly articulated evidentiary standards. This lack of clarity significantly slowed the process, forcing reviewers to evaluate student papers and mentally parse rubric criteria simultaneously. As such, the absence of unambiguous evaluation measures resulted in a more subjective than objective review outcome.
 - The readers found it difficult to find evidence to score the rubrics for PLO 1 (exercise ethical sensibility). The need to organize and rewrite the rubrics

discussed previously may have contributed to it. During the workshop with the teaching faculty, several professors stressed the need to create writing assignments that specifically prompt students to demonstrate learning in this PLO.

- Action items:
 - Organize and rewrite the rubrics for the PLOs to make them clearer and more easily calibrated across different readers.
 - Study the writing assignment prompts from different courses to see whether the variation can contribute to the quality of student work. Collect assignment prompts for student papers for the next assessment exercises.
 - PLO 1 needs to be clarified and included in classroom instruction and assignments.

These action items will be incorporated into the final section of this report, together with suggestions on how to proceed with them.

In addition to the direct outcome assessment exercises that DRBU carries out regularly, the University also conducts several annual student and teaching faculty surveys on the program, some as instruments for indirect outcome assessment. For the current program review self-study, the Program Review Committee, the Academic Resource Center, and the Committee on Co-curricular Programs and Activities developed and conducted these indirect assessment studies with the assistance of the new IR staff. See [Attachment 3.10](#) for a list of surveys conducted for the 2016-2017 academic year; the attachment also contains link to the complete survey results.

Based on the results, 100% of those responding to the MA Student Survey 2017 agreed that the program has helped them to develop in each of the four PLOs; and virtually all of the respondents to the Teaching Faculty Survey 2017 observed that the program helped the students to grow in each of the four PLOs.

Besides learning outcome assessment, DRBU collected and analyzed evidence for other indicators of student success. The findings are presented in the following sections.

Graduation and retention rates

The average two-year graduation rate for the first three matriculating classes of the MA program is 86%, and the program's retention rate (defined as the proportion of MA students continuing onto the second year of the program) is 89%. Virtually all those who did not complete the program left in the first year. [Attachment 3.11](#) contains more detailed figures, including disaggregated figures by gender and ethnicity.

Post-graduation statistics

The following table shows the 1) employment rate of the graduates and 2) percentage of graduates entering further studies:

Table 3.B. Post-Graduation Statistics (Employment and Other)

Class	Graduates	Employed	Continue to Advanced Study
2015	4	4 (100%)	0
2016	6	5 (83%)	1 (17%)
2017	7	4 (57%)	0

Communication of program requirements and expectations

DRBU's all-required and sequentially built programs, though somewhat unusual, are arguably easier to understand than programs that use an elective system. MA students follow a predetermined sequence through the respective curriculum. Approximately one month prior to the start of every semester, students receive the course schedule in several ways:

- Email — The Office of Academic Affairs announces the course schedule through an email to all students, faculty, and staff of the University.
- Student Information System (SIS) — The Office of the Registrar publishes the course schedule on SIS and enrolls each cohort of students in its required list of courses. Students may access their course registration and register for language courses on SIS.
- Faculty Cohort Mentor Meetings — Faculty mentors of each cohort discuss the required courses with students at the regular cohort meetings. Mentors may address any questions on the curriculum or gather student concerns and feedback regarding the course schedule at this time.
- Bulletin Board — A paper copy of the schedule is posted on the bulletin board in the main lobby of the DRBU building.

Cohort mentors (see [Attachment 3.12](#)) are two professors assigned to each student cohort at the beginning of each academic year. They serve many of the same functions as a faculty adviser would in another institution. Cohort mentors typically meet with the whole cohort together, and help students with their academic plans, identify particular academic challenges, and locate academic support services. Students can request individual meetings with cohort mentors.

71% of the respondents to the Graduates Exit Survey thought that the program had explained its requirements and expectations clearly to them, and 80% of the students who responded to the MA Student Survey were extremely satisfied or satisfied with their cohort mentoring.

Channels for student feedback

Students have several formal channels by which to provide feedback to the program:

- Semesterly student conferences, during which each student's professors meet with the student to discuss his or her progress in learning and invite the student to reflect and respond.
- Cohort mentors (see previous section), who typically meet with the whole cohort regularly and with whom students can also request individual meetings. Both the group and individual meetings are also occasions for students to provide feedback on the

program.

- Anonymous course evaluations, which students fill out at the end of each semester. DRBU is still exploring different methods of conducting course evaluations so as to be even more compatible with the program's unique model.
- Student surveys, which DRBU regularly conducts in order to solicit feedback on the programs.

Students do not have official representation at faculty meetings, but with the formal and informal channels described in this report, student feedback is regularly solicited and considered. In response to the Graduates Exit Survey of 2017, 83% of the respondents agreed that they were involved in decisions relevant to their education.

C. Students

See [Attachment 3.13](#) for graphs showing the profile of students at DRBU.

List of Attached Evidences for Section Three:

- 3.1 [Curriculum Map for MA Program](#)
- 3.2 [DRBU Academic Assessment](#)
- 3.3 [Sample Syllabi](#)
- 3.4 [Faculty Governance Manual](#)
- 3.5 [Excerpt from Faculty Governance Manual - Professor Curriculum Oversight](#)
- 3.6 [Excerpt from Faculty Governance Manual - Teaching Faculty Responsibilities](#)
- 3.7 [Excerpt from Faculty Governance Manual - Curricular and Instructional Change Procedure](#)
- 3.8 [Self-study report from Co-curricular Programs and Activities](#)
- 3.9 [Summary of Assessment Workshops 2017](#)
- 3.10 [List of Surveys 2016-2017](#)
- 3.11 [Graduation and Retention Rates](#)
- 3.12 [Excerpt from DRBU Catalog - Cohort Mentors](#)
- 3.13 [MA Student Profile based on Admissions Data 2013-2016](#)
- 3.14 [Rubrics for Four MA PLOs](#)

Section Four. Faculty Quality and Development

(Please refer to [Attachment 1.5](#) Self-Study Report Template for suggested prompts to this section)

A. Teaching at DRBU

Because of the integrated nature of its two programs, all members of the teaching faculty, or professors, have collective oversight and teach across both programs. The DRBU Professor Plan of Employment (see [Attachment 4.1](#)) is an important document that describes professors' responsibilities, the distinction between full-time and part-time positions, faculty evaluation criteria, and processes for reappointment and permanent appointment, termination, and grievance.

The primary responsibility of professors, according to the Plan, is “effective teaching in DRBU’s educational programs,” which extends to: 1) collective curricular and instructional oversight and innovation (“work collectively to organize and determine all instructional matters such as content, methods of teaching, learning objectives, and methods of evaluation and assessment”), and 2) discovery and integration (“make themselves as knowledgeable as possible about all aspects of the university’s programs”).

The Plan of Employment outlines what professors do, but what qualifies as “effective teaching” in DRBU’s educational model?

The nature of discovery itself is one of the central concerns for DRBU. Therefore, across this integrated curriculum, texts are selected because they provide a solid foundation for understanding the ideas, values, and ethos that govern contemporary life and therefore shape every type of discourse and discovery. Texts are often chosen because they are embedded with sophisticated methods of deep questioning, testing, and affirming. This central concern with the nature of discovery comes to the fore in two strands of courses on comparative and Buddhist hermeneutics, where students examine the theoretical frameworks, interpretive models, and experiential elements of learning from outside and within the Buddhist traditions.

Texts thus selected to be part of the curriculum are not intentionally difficult, but they demand the readers’ best efforts. While professors and students alike bring to bear on the texts all the knowledge, methods and strategies of inquiry, and language and intellectual skills they each possess to make sense of and interpret the reading, this type of deep and immersive engagement is also inevitably tangled with assumptions (examined or unexamined), opinions, biases, and predispositions, which may constrain or hinder any further, broader, or deeper explorations of these great works.

To maintain this delicate balance while maximizing direct engagement with the selected texts, a discussion-driven classroom pedagogy is chosen to couple with the curriculum. Both students and professors are challenged to use all their resources to make sense of what they are reading, while not only suspending, but also offering up their preconceived notions, views, and assumptions to be examined, modified, or even discarded through discussions and reflections.

This type of instructional model highly values students' taking initiative to push their own boundaries through direct reading of texts, asking probing questions, and participating in meaningful conversations. Further, integration is one of the defining features of DRBU's two programs and its governance. The "Toward a Classics Curriculum" section of the DRBU Catalog ([Attachment 4.2](#)) states that these two programs are integrated in that "their curricular strands are not stand-alone modules each advancing a compartmentalized area of study, but are intertwined threads (or 'strands') of a tightly woven fabric that as a whole result in a unified and requisite set of knowledge and intellectual skills." Students and professors are thus encouraged to "reference all other parts of the curriculum pertinent to the discussions and extend the circle of their conversations beyond the classroom into other parts of their lives at DRBU." To this end, DRBU emulates the practices of its peer institutions that offer programs based on a similar model to minimize, and in many cases, eliminate reliance on specialized field expertise in learning and instruction.

On the one hand, instances of field expertise, such as well-written and widely used textbooks, references to and citations of secondary sources written by experts, and lecturing by professors who specialize in their respective disciplines, may convey organized and predigested nuggets or systems of knowledge and the methods used to acquire them. On the other hand, however well intentioned and brilliant, interjection of field expertise may act to displace the immediacy of primary texts and discussions shared by the seminar participants and can have the effect of concluding and undermining instead of opening up and encouraging students' further conversations and explorations on the texts at hand.

Given these considerations, DRBU defines the role of teaching faculty as follows:

- Professors act as guides, whose primary role is to encourage and assist students in the task of inquiring and knowing for themselves, rather than serving simply as a dispenser of well-organized systems of knowledge. Therefore, professors eschew the more common role to "profess," or to interject their expertise, however well intentioned.
- Students are encouraged to draw from all parts of the curriculum in their reflections and discussions. To promote and facilitate this integrated learning across the curriculum, and because professors are not presumed to be area experts in the classes they teach, they are expected to, with appropriate training and development, teach outside of their areas of academic training.
- Because DRBU is primarily a teaching institution, and professors venture outside of their academic background areas with extensive study of material in several disciplines in order to teach across the curriculum, the University does not expect its professors to conduct academic research (see section on teaching faculty review system for more on scholarship activities).
- Reflecting the broad and integrated nature of DRBU's degree programs, and that, in time, most professors will teach partly outside of their areas of expertise, the teaching faculty is not organized by academic departments. No professor is assigned to any one class permanently, and all professors are collectively responsible for the review, development, and revision of the curricula.

Professors receive reappointments and permanent appointments contingent upon a successful review of their work at DRBU. The five criteria used to evaluate professors for re-appointment and permanent appointment, which are listed in the Professor Plan of Employment, reflect professors' roles, responsibilities, and qualities as demanded by DRBU's programs:

- Excellence in intellect and imagination.
- Serious engagement with and commitment to DRBU's programs, as demonstrated by continued learning in the areas they encompass, an increasing awareness and understanding of the deep questions the programs raise, and meaningful contribution to the learning of colleagues and students in the classroom and beyond.
- Competence in leading small, seminar-style classes, demonstrated in part by modeling skills and methods for learning, close listening, and being a resourceful guide to student inquiry.
- Willingness and ability to teach in all parts of DRBU's programs.
- Responsiveness to the needs of DRBU's community as a civil and collegial member.

A statement that summarizes the nature of being a professor at DRBU is posted on the DRBU website ([Attachment 4.11](#)) for those interested in a teaching faculty position at DRBU. A more detailed discussion on the review processes for professors, including elaborations on the five review criteria, are in a later section of this report.

Other responsibilities of professors

In addition to the primary responsibility of effective teaching, the Plan of Employment lists a set of secondary responsibilities, which include areas related to student learning (provide adequate evaluation and feedback to and advise students); assessment (contribute to other instruction-related activities, such as those related to assessment); and service (serve on standing and ad hoc faculty committees and attend all required faculty functions). [Attachment 4.3](#) shows the faculty committee membership since the program's inception in 2013.

Workload and course assignment

In spring 2014, the Dean of Academics clarified that, to be considered full-time, a professor needs to teach or be granted relief from teaching 12 units in a semester (each MA course is three units and most of the BA courses are four units each). The Office of Academics developed a procedure that gives professors opportunities to discuss their workload with the Dean of Academics, including course assignments and alternate duties such as developing a course, carrying out administrative work, and auditing a course as part of the process of teaching across the curriculum (see [Attachment 4.4](#)). The dean finalizes professors' course assignments and other duties for the next term after individual discussions with each professor on his or her proposal. According to results from the 2017 Teaching Faculty Survey, 100% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that his/her workload is reasonable and sustainable; 94% strongly agreed or agreed that sufficient time and resources are available for course development.

Training and professional development

Training and professional development are important ways to enhance the capacity of DRBU's teaching faculty. Of the different resources and opportunities DRBU offers in this area, the most

important ones for professors are those intended to assist professors' adjustment to teaching under DRBU's pedagogical model, especially for those who are venturing outside of their academic background. DRBU provides opportunities to observe or co-teach a class with a more senior member of the teaching faculty. These arrangements allow the junior professors to gain familiarity with the materials and hone their skills in leading seminar discussions on primary texts.

Thus far, the higher-than-average professor-to-student ratio has allowed these co-teaching arrangements to take place in approximately two-thirds of classes taught since the new programs' launch, and nearly 40% of classes have at least one instructor teaching outside of his or her primary academic background. In addition, five professors have observed classes taught by senior professors.

Thus far, professors seem to respond positively to co-teaching arrangements and the training and mentoring they bring. On the Spring 2017 Teaching Faculty Survey, 93% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that DRBU provides sufficient support to teach across the curriculum, and 100% of the faculty strongly agreed or agreed that co-teaching and mentoring is effective in training and developing members of the teaching faculty.

While co-teaching seems to be an effective method of training for professors and perhaps necessary as DRBU implements the new programs and builds up the capacity of its teaching faculty, maintaining this scale of co-teaching arrangement is not a sustainable practice beyond the short term. Among DRBU's more established peer institutions, only St. John's College maintains a practice of having more than one instructor teaching any course: the core seminar in the college's undergraduate program, which constitutes one quarter of the program's course offerings, is always led by two tutors. All courses in other "Great Books" colleges seem to be taught by one instructor. New tutors at all these programs seem to audit courses as a preparation for teaching, but only occasionally do these programs award course relief for such efforts.

The Dean of Academics and the teaching faculty need to develop and adopt a sustainable system to facilitate and bolster the practice of teaching across the curriculum. DRBU will look to its peers for best practices in this area. An initial research into these colleges' practices came up with the following ideas that may be included in DRBU's future system:

- Judicious use of co-teaching arrangements and course relief for auditing a course.
- Forming professor study groups such as the Archon system used in DRBU's peer institutions. Archons are leaders of groups of tutors teaching different sections of the same course. They lead discussions during the semester on the reading and pedagogy. In some instances, Archons are given course relief for their efforts. Given that DRBU's MA program only has one incoming cohort each year, the format of faculty study groups needs to be adapted.
- Summer sessions for professors. Thomas Aquinas College offers summer workshops on different parts of its program's curriculum. The college gives stipends as an incentive to tutors who attend.

Beyond training for teaching across the curriculum, DRBU allocates additional resources for faculty and staff professional development. Since the 2010-2013 Self Study, teaching and administrative faculty and staff members have attended internal and external workshops, training sessions, and conferences in a wide variety of areas, such as assessment, regulation compliance, legal issues in student services, restorative justice, sexual-harassment awareness and prevention, and accreditation. In the last two years, professors have organized and attended conferences in Vedic texts, contemplative studies, and philosophical counseling. DRBU also provides subscriptions to electronic journals to professors and fundings for purchasing books and other instructional materials to develop a course or to prepare to teach one.

DRBU has also arranged conference calls with and visits to other “Great Books” colleges—St. John’s College, Thomas Aquinas College, and Shimer College—on multiple occasions. These allow DRBU professors, administrators, and staff members to learn from and exchange ideas with counterparts from comparable institutions.

This last type of professional development opportunity was especially valuable for DRBU professors, administrators, and support staff. Information, documents, and shared experiences from St. John’s College and Thomas Aquinas College significantly impacted the design of the new programs and their supporting systems and structures. Visits to these campuses helped to turn the abstract idea of a liberal arts college into a lived experience and realistic vision for the DRBU visitors.

On these visits, generously and graciously hosted by these colleges (including three visits to Thomas Aquinas College and two to St. John’s College in Santa Fe), DRBU groups ranging from one to 15 members toured the facilities, observed classes, and spoke with members of the colleges’ teaching faculty and administrators. A wide range of issues was discussed: instruction, students, operation and administration, and institutional governance. Interactions with and assistance from these colleges continued after the visits in the form of email exchanges and phone conversations on specific questions from DRBU. The university plans on maintaining these important relationships.

Table 4.A shows the annual budget for professional development-related activities for the University. DRBU plans on maintaining an appropriate level of resources to support professional development for administrative faculty and staff members for the foreseeable future, and demonstrates this commitment in nearly doubling the per FTE personnel allocation.

Academic Year	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Personnel FTE	25	27	28
Budget	\$13,500	\$25,620	\$26,055
Budget per FTE	\$540	\$949	\$930

B. Faculty Governance

The MA program is carried out by the DRBU teaching faculty, which also oversees the BA

program in Liberal Arts, the only other degree program at the University. Therefore, the faculty governance structure for the MA program is the same one that governs the University overall.

According to the bylaws and the Faculty Governance Manual ([Attachment 4.5](#)), the DRBU faculty (both teaching and administrative) is delegated the authority and the responsibility to “prescribe academic curricula, to adopt and refine instructional methods, and to carry on all of the educational and administrative functions of the University,” and has “oversight of the non-academic life on the University campus.” In other words, the faculty has plenary powers to deliberate on and make important policy decisions or set guidelines on all aspects of the University. These policies and guidelines are then carried out or implemented by professors and administrators in their respective areas.

The integration of professors and key administrators is a practice consistent with DRBU’s vision of a collegial learning community formed around two integrated programs, and mirrors the policies adopted by several other “Great Books” and liberal arts colleges. This practice aims to remove the traditional divide between teaching faculty and administrators. In addition, it fosters a deeper understanding of the programs among administrators and a higher level of involvement in the university’s governance among professors.

Overall, DRBU’s implementation of this faculty governance structure, as designed to support the new programs, seems to be working successfully. One hundred percent of respondents agreed that teaching faculty has an important role in governance of the University, according to the Spring 2017 Teaching Faculty Survey. The WSCUC SAV1 Visiting Team seems to concur, as it observed “that both [teaching faculty] and administrators emphasized how the faculty/administration connection exhibits a special awareness of and sensitivity to those roles. To lose such dynamics would destroy the true spirit of the institution. This sentiment was shared across the board.” (p. 18 Attachment 1.2)

The faculty meeting exercises the plenary powers described above by making decisions and formulating recommendations on educational and administrative policies and guidelines. Called by the president, these meetings require a quorum of a simple majority of faculty members, with the condition that no less than a simple majority of professors is present. Although all members of the faculty deliberate on all matters, only professors can vote on matters related to instruction.

Between 2010 and spring 2015, the faculty met at least weekly. Many non-faculty staff members also joined in. These frequent and inclusive meetings were necessary at that time, due to the fact that design, development, and implementation of the new programs and other aspects of the University required a high level of collaboration and coordination across different units. However, as student enrollment increased in the years following the launch of the new programs, and faculty and staff members shifted their attention and time toward teaching and serving increasing number of classes and students, the weekly meeting schedule involving a large number of DRBU professors, administrators, and staff became unsustainable.

Therefore, beginning in fall 2015, the faculty began to explore different meeting formats, aiming to balance the values of effectiveness, transparency, and inclusiveness with the need to create

efficiency and sustainable practices. These explorations have led to progress in the following areas:

- Reduced number of meetings: Instead of weekly meetings, as were commonplace between 2010 and 2015, only 12 faculty meetings took place in 2016-2017. These 90-minute meetings were scheduled on Tuesdays, right before afternoon classes, so they could not go over time. From purely a time-saving perspective, this improvement was a success.
- Delegation to faculty committees (see [Attachment 4.6](#) for descriptions of standing faculty committees): The faculty has relied more on standing and ad hoc committees to carry out important projects and tasks, including refining and implementing a program review process; clarifying the system for teaching-faculty review; carrying out a review of the president; admitting students; improving the library; and organizing co-curricular programs and activities. These committees are charged with running a particular operation (such as admissions or co-curricular programs and activities), developing process, policy, and procedure (such as teaching faculty review), or both. On important policy decisions, the committees prepare proposals for the faculty to consider and hopefully adopt. By and large, committees are active, functional, and making positive contributions to the governance and operation of DRBU and its programs.

On the other hand, the teaching faculty continues its efforts to overcome several challenges related to governance, some of which are revealed by the first iteration of improvements described above.

A significant challenge is insufficient time for decision making. DRBU's attempt to reduce time spent in large group meetings may have led to fewer meetings, but also left insufficient time for appropriate levels of deliberation when making important decisions. The effect of this over-correction is evident in the change of frequency of meetings toward the end of the 2016-2017 academic year. The faculty meetings took place approximately once a month between August and February, then five times between early March and early May. The monthly schedule for faculty meeting simply could not accommodate all the time needed to deliberate on important decisions on instruction and governance.

This time crunch is at least partly due to DRBU's success in getting new programs on track. The WSCUC SAVI Visiting Team remarked that what DRBU has undertaken in "offering two new programs, creating policies and procedures, and applying for initial candidacy/accreditation" is "ambitious," but suggested that as the programs and the supporting systems mature, "the number of meetings will probably decrease." (p. 24 Attachment 1.2)

The reliance on committees has also encountered a structural challenge as a consequence of the current small size of DRBU's teaching faculty. The increased role of functioning committees represents progress in the implementation of DRBU's governance processes. However, given that only 13 professors are on the active roster, and that each committee has three or more members, a majority of active professors serve on more than one committee. The Visiting Team cautioned DRBU about the "possibility of faculty and staff burnout" (p. 24 Attachment 1.2) in

juggling these responsibilities.

Although currently, the teaching faculty seems to have been maintaining a good balance (100% respondents to the 2017 Spring Teaching Faculty Survey strongly agreed or agreed that his/her workload was reasonable and sustainable), the University will benefit from regular monitoring of this situation. With careful planning, as the size of the faculty grows in response to increasing enrollment, service on committees to carry out important responsibilities will become more spread out across the expanded teaching faculty.

Another challenge presented by the size of the current teaching faculty is the composition of the Instruction Committee, which serves important roles in curricular and instructional oversight and academic administration of the programs (see [Attachment 4.5](#)) According to the Faculty Governance Manual, up to six professors who are elected by their peers sit on the Instruction Committee. The committee assists the dean in making administrative decisions or formulating proposals on issues related to instruction, such as the curriculum, pedagogy, employment and review of professors, course assignment and scheduling, and program review and outcome assessment. It also plays an important role in the review and appointment of the president when the Board of Trustees initiates such proceedings.

Given the current small number of professors (seven FTE and 13 in terms of headcount), the professors elected to expand the membership of the Instruction Committee to include all professors in Fall 2013. As the number of professors grows, the faculty will assess this temporary alteration annually, and decide when to revert the membership of the committee to accord with the Governance Manual.

The faculty is committed to improvement in the decision-making mechanism, so as to retain DRBU's value of transparency and inclusion while ensuring efficient functioning of the University and its programs. In spring 2017, the teaching faculty began to pilot different meeting practices that aim to address the need to seek advice and build consensus widely while striving for an efficient and effective decision-making process. The faculty plans to review these proposals to improve meeting practice in fall of 2017.

C. Review Process for Professors

A review process for professors as part of their reappointment and permanent appointment is an important part of the DRBU Plan of Employment (See [Attachment 4.1](#)). The main features of the process outlined in the Plan of Employment is summarized in the following table:

Purpose of the process	The review provides the basis for deciding on the reappointment and permanent appointment of professors.
Who performs the review?	The Dean of Academics and the Instruction Committee.
Frequency of review	Three to four times in a professor's first seven or so years of full-time service at DRBU. A full-time professor receives a

	<p>two-year initial appointment (or two one-year initial appointments). This initial appointment(s) is followed by a two-year, then a three-year reappointment. Each reappointment is contingent on a successful review.</p> <p>A review also precedes a professor's permanent appointment. During a professor's three-year appointment (typically in year five to seven of his or her service at DRBU), the Dean and the Instruction Committee initiates a review process for the professor's permanent appointment. A professor either receives a permanent appointment at the end of the three-year appointment or is not reappointed at DRBU.</p>
What are the review criteria?	<p>See the Plan of Employment for the criteria's full wording. In short, the criteria are: 1) Excellence in intellect and imagination; 2) serious engagement and commitment to DRBU's programs; 3) competence in leading small, seminar-style classes; 4) willingness and ability to teach in all parts of DRBU's programs; and 5) responsiveness to the needs of DRBU's community as a civil and collegial member.</p>
What about part-time professors?	<p>See the Plan of Employment for the full definition of full-time workload for professors. In short, a full-time professor has 12 hours per week of classroom time (or course relief for other duties).</p> <p>Prior to permanent appointment, special one-year appointments and reappointments may be given to professors who intend to teach on a part-time basis only. Such a professor may subsequently apply for and receive a regular appointment. Special part-time appointments may then be counted on a fractional basis toward eligibility for permanent appointment.</p>

The Dean of Academics and the Office of Academic Affairs piloted a round of professor evaluations in spring, 2015 (see [Attachment 4.7](#)). The pilot process begins with professors' self reflection. The process asks professors to reflect on their work with respect to the five qualitative criteria stated in the Plan of Employment, especially around their teaching and efforts to venture outside their academic background.

The reflection also includes samples of assignment prompts, student work samples corresponding to the prompts, and professors' feedback to the students. This helps show how well professors integrate the student learning outcomes in their teaching. The process also invites professors to provide feedback to DRBU on how they can be supported further in their work and their development.

A review panel for each professor is then convened to conduct the review and hold a conversation with the professor under review. Each panel comprises the dean as the chair, the university president, and a peer reviewer of each professor's choice. The president then communicates the result of the review to the professor within a week of the panel.

The WSCUC SAV1 Visiting Team affirmed that DRBU has taken "great strides to create an integrated system that values the art of learning and teaching, input, and growth," but suggested that the University include "feedback, promotion, and appropriate peer review as part of the evaluation review process." The WASC Senior Commission adopted this suggestion in its July 2016 Action Letter to DRBU (see [Attachment 1.1](#)):

"DRBU has developed a unique model of Great Books education. As faculty are encouraged to engage in a broad range of scholarly and research activity, the university may want to consider providing particular support to encourage them to publish and present papers on the nature and benefit of the institution's pedagogy.

In addition, faculty scholarship needs to be a significant part of faculty review that incorporates the evaluation of both junior and senior faculty members and aligns faculty evaluation with the process for appointing and reappointing faculty.

The university should document all faculty policies and processes in a centralized location such as the Faculty Governance Manual to provide DRBU with a clear and comprehensive model of faculty review."

In fall of 2016, the President appointed one permanent and two non-permanent professors to the ad hoc Faculty Review Committee, with the accreditation liaison officer (ALO) acting as the chair ex officio. The committee's tasks are:

1. Make proposals that help to clarify and elaborate on the DRBU Professor Plan of Employment's ([Attachment 4.1](#)) review process, including how it will incorporate different types of scholarship activities.
2. Based on the clarifications and elaborations in (1), propose a procedure for review of professors effective Fall 2017.
3. Ensure circulation and easy access by professors a Faculty Handbook (see [Attachment 4.12](#)) that includes the DRBU Bylaws, the Faculty Governance Manual, the annotated Professor Plan of Employment, and the new review procedure.

The committee met bi-weekly or monthly in 2016-2017. The committee also consulted with the Dean of Academics and the Office of Academic Affairs on the initial proposals and logistics of administering the review procedure. Further, the committee made three updates on the progress of its work to the teaching faculty prior to submitting a proposal containing clarifications and elaborations of the Professor Plan of Employment. The teaching faculty adopted the proposal in April 2017. The content of the proposal has been incorporated into the Plan of Employment as annotations. A procedure for reviews that will be carried out in 2016-2017 was adopted by the teaching faculty in August 2017. The annotated Professor Plan of Employment ([Attachment 4.13](#)) and the review procedure ([Attachment 4.14](#)) can be accessed on the DRBU website and

paper copies have been distributed to all the professors.

The committee devoted a large portion of its time deliberating on several key areas of the Plan of Employment's review process. These areas are the evaluation criteria, scholarship activities, roles of instructors, and review process for professors with permanent appointments.

Elaboration on Review Criteria

When the teaching faculty was developing the review process in the Professor Plan of Employment during the 2010-2013 Self Study, the five review criteria were chosen because they strongly correspond and reflect professors' roles, responsibilities, and qualities, as demanded by DRBU's programs. However, the reviewers needed to be furnished with practical guidelines, so as to apply the criteria evenly across different reviewees; doing so also improves the transparency of the review process, by providing clearer expectations.

In its deliberation, the committee aims to shape the review process to account for the anticipated growth of the teaching faculty while making suggestions on how the process can be adapted to DRBU's current conditions. For example, the committee proposed, as a rule of thumb for criteria four (willingness and ability to teach in all parts of DRBU's programs), that a professor teach 16 different courses in the MA and BA programs prior to receiving permanent appointment. However, the committee also acknowledges that applying this rule of thumb is only practicable (and reasonable) when the programs both have multiple incoming cohorts each year; currently, with only one MA and one BA cohort each year, the number of courses the programs offer is very small, and moving professors through different parts of the programs will take longer than in the future when the programs are more established. Therefore, currently, the reviewers will focus more on the professor's willingness rather than capacity to move across the curriculum when applying criteria four in reviews.

[Attachment 4.8](#) contains the set of proposals submitted by the Faculty Review Committee and adopted by the teaching faculty in April 2017, which help to clarify and elaborate the Plan of Employment. The proposals on the review criteria include a short description of the criteria, guidelines on how to apply them, and examples of types of evidence that demonstrate professors' accomplishments under them. Some guidelines (such as the rule of thumb for teaching across the curriculum) are more refined than others (for example, guidelines on how to apply criteria one, 'excellence in intellect and imagination'). The teaching faculty will continue to improve the review process as it gets implemented formally for the first times in the next several years, as the WSCUC Visiting Team noted "the need for DRBU to go through more iteration of faculty evaluations...to help the institution systematize the evaluation process." (p. 18 Attachment 1.2)

Scholarship Activities

The Faculty Review Committee has also worked on addressing the WSCUC's recommendations with regard to scholarship activities—both in supporting and encouraging different types of

scholarship activities as well as incorporating them directly into the review process for professors.

DRBU recognizes that venturing outside one's academic background areas to study materials in several disciplines is a serious scholarly endeavor. The Plan of Employment states that the Dean of Academics "may grant a professor course relief to perform alternate duties such as administrative work and auditing a course for the Professor's development." The Training and Professional Development section above describes DRBU's continuing efforts in supporting professors' development in this area. As an important aspect of their primary responsibility of teaching, professors' "willingness and capacity" to engage in the scholarship activity of teaching different parts of the curriculum is one of the review criteria.

Another type of scholarship activities that DRBU professors engage in is curricular innovation. A collective feat of curricular innovation on the part of DRBU's professors in these initial years of the new programs has been the development of the entire curriculum for the two programs (still in progress for the BA degree). This required particular innovation, given this somewhat unusual educational model. To support professors' efforts in developing, preparing, and teaching a class for the first time, the Dean of Academics has been granting relief from classroom teaching to professors responsible for developing a new course.

Although each program has a common curriculum, once the professors finish developing the remaining BA courses, course-development efforts will become incremental. However, since neither program's curriculum is fixed, professors are always encouraged to propose refinements—adding a new text, changing the sections to include for an existing text—through the curricular-change procedure outlined in the Faculty Governance Manual and described earlier in this report (see [Attachment 3.7](#)).

The following are the main ways DRBU is supporting professors' activities in this area:

- The dean grants relief from classroom teaching to professors who are developing a new course.
- The Office of Academic Affairs has an annual budget for purchasing texts and other materials for course and curricular development.
- Curriculum development work is considered valid evidence supporting a professor's commitment to DRBU's programs and educational model, which is second of the five review criteria.

Though it is not required, DRBU welcomes professors efforts in pursuing their own intellectual interests, which may not relate directly to DRBU's programs, and which may overlap with conventional academic research. The University supports these activities by providing professors with subscriptions to electronic academic journals and allocating a portion of the annual budget toward organizing and attending conferences and workshops (the budget for this almost doubled between academic years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017).

In addition, as a result of the Faculty Review Committee's work in response to WSCUC's

recommendation, research and publishing “on the nature and benefit of [DRBU’s] pedagogy” will serve as affirmative evidence supporting a professor’s review under criteria two, serious engagement and commitment to DRBU’s mission & programs. DRBU has further allocated \$6,000 in its annual budget for planning and issuing a journal whose purpose includes publishing professors’ work on the nature and benefit of DRBU’s model and programs.

Overall, professors seem to feel positive about the support they receive from DRBU on engaging different types of scholarship activities. Ninety-three percent of the respondents to the Spring 2017 Teaching Faculty Survey strongly agreed or agreed that DRBU provides sufficient support to teach across the curriculum and 94% strongly agreed or agreed that sufficient time and resources are provided for course development. Approximately two-thirds (64%) of the respondents agreed that they are given sufficient time and resources for other scholarship activities such as writing and publishing.

Review of professors with permanent appointment

DRBU’s teaching faculty recognizes the importance of reviews for professors with permanent appointment (or senior professors) as an aid in professors’ continuing development and ensuring effective teaching. The Faculty Review Committee deliberated on the topic of review process for and came up with the following observations and recommendations (that were subsequently adopted by the teaching faculty):

- DRBU has prioritized carrying out reappointment reviews for eight non-permanent professors (six full- and two part-time) in 2017-2018. The dean, the teaching faculty, and the Faculty Review Committee will benefit from the experience of implementing these reviews. The Faculty Review Committee will propose a review process for permanent professors in spring 2018, based on the following recommendations.
- Many post-tenure reviews that the committee found in its research have ties to promotion or financial incentives. DRBU has only two ranks—permanent (senior) and non-permanent (junior) professors—and currently employs a flat salary system.
- Therefore, the review process for permanent professors will be primarily aimed at professors’ continuing development and ensuring continuing quality of teaching.
- DRBU will adopt the practice of stressing, during post-tenure reviews, that the professors’ permanent status is not being called into question.
- The five review criteria maintain their relevance after permanent appointment, although emphasis, expectations, frequency of review, and instruments used for collecting evidence may be different from reviews for reappointment and permanent—typically more streamlined and less frequent.

Instructors

In the process of attempting to clarify and elaborate the review process for professors and consequently the expectations on them and their roles and responsibilities in instruction and governance, the Faculty Review Committee worked to propose a solution for resolving a grey area that has developed as a result of this period of fast and dynamic growth and transition for DRBU. In addition to permanent and non-permanent professors, another group of teaching personnel, known as instructors, teach and support student learning. During the time when

DRBU was launching the MA and the BA programs, instructors were brought in as aids to professors or to help teach a course, predominantly in language courses. The following are the circumstances that led to the use of instructors in DRBU's programs:

- Professors wear many hats at a small institution like DRBU, especially as the University has been launching two new programs. Important tasks such as developing curriculum and governance system for the new programs, administrative tasks, and applying for regional accreditation demand additional time from professors and led to temporary and fluctuating shortage in teaching capacity.
- DRBU's teaching faculty aimed to design the two programs' curricula so that, in time and with training and support, all professors can teach throughout both programs. However, even under that premise, certain courses will be harder for professors without background to transition into than others. Anecdotally, the dean of St. John's College speculated that Sanskrit courses offered in the college's MA in Eastern Classics are the most difficult to teach for the college's tutors. This sentiment is likely shared by DRBU professors on language and math courses. Not surprisingly, the programs have relied on instructors primarily in language and math courses.
- Current instructors are people familiar with DRBU. Five out of seven have administrative roles at DRBU and three have experience teaching in DRBU's sunsetted legacy programs, and three are recent graduates of the new MA program. Their familiarity with DRBU and its programs helps to somewhat ease their transition to assisting with teaching in the programs.

DRBU currently employs 2.5 FTE instructors (seven in terms of headcount), and these instructors appear to perform competently in their limited teaching responsibilities. However, the introduction of instructors into DRBU was largely driven by circumstances described above and not by design, the category of instructor does not appear in DRBU's governance documents (such as the Faculty Governance Manual and the Professor Plan of Employment). This ambiguity raises questions, including the following: Are instructors part of the teaching faculty? Can they vote on curricular matters like professors do? Are they on track to become professors, and therefore receive permanent appointment? Will they be reviewed the same way as professors? If not, what is the review process for instructors?

The Faculty Review Committee deliberated carefully on this delicate topic of instructors, and came up with a set of recommendations based on the following considerations:

- Having a category of teaching personnel who teach only a course or two runs contrary to DRBU's model, in which teaching across the curriculum is an important feature.
- Consistent with DRBU's emphasis on integration, the teaching faculty is not divided by specialty, department, or program, and all its members share collective ownership and oversight over the common curriculum, pedagogy, and all matters related to instruction. Even though two ranks exist—those with and without permanent appointment—the two have virtually the same rights, authorities, and responsibilities. Therefore, establishing a category for instructors and creating additional hierarchy within the teaching faculty seems incompatible with the intent and design of the program and its governance.

- DRBU professors not only have sole oversight over the academic programs, but also share University governance responsibilities with senior administrators. Therefore, the hiring process and the review process for reappointment and permanent appointment for professors are necessarily rigorous. A vetting and review system equal in rigor needs to be in place for another category of personnel to have a similar level of role and responsibilities in governance as the professors. However, creating a separate category of instructors seems redundant if it shares the same role, responsibility, and review process with the existing category of professors.

In April 2017, the teaching faculty adopted the following proposal from the committee:

- DRBU will maintain the existing governance structure and review process outlined in the Faculty Governance Manual and the Professor Plan of Employment. The University will not establish instructor as a category of the teaching faculty.
- Future teaching personnel will be hired only as professors and not as instructors.
- DRBU appreciates the work of the current instructors and will work with them to find different ways in which they might continue their services at DRBU, including:
 - Creating a pathway for existing instructors to become professors, including ways to weigh favorably their contribution to DRBU.
 - Establish instructor as a legacy category so that existing instructors can opt to be grandfathered into that category. This solution requires developing corresponding policies and processes related to governance and review.
- Research and propose a special category of teaching personnel similar to “lab directors” at DRBU’s peer institutions. The aim of this type of personnel is to facilitate professors teaching in the BA program’s science and language strands. At DRBU’s peer institutions, these personnel assist the instruction of laboratory science courses but do not teach them, and do not have the same governance responsibilities as their teaching faculty.

The Faculty Review Committee plans to further develop these recommendations and begin to implement them in 2017-2018, including commencing to provide opportunities to instructors who are interested in becoming professors, and developing governance-related policies for instructors who opt to be grandfathered in as instructors.

D. Capacity

DRBU has 12 professors and one emeritus professor on its active roster (plus one inactive professor and four inactive emeritus professors). Because four of the current professors are part-time and eight also hold administrative responsibilities, DRBU currently has the teaching capacity of seven full-time equivalent professors.

Because DRBU’s teaching faculty are not separated by programs, and the format of the classes for the two programs are the same (small discussion-centered seminars and tutorials organized by cohort), the professor-to-student ratio for DRBU is calculated using size of the teaching faculty and total enrollment of the two programs. DRBU’s total student enrollment is projected to grow to 69 in 2020–2021. Even without hiring another FTE professor between now and then,

a projected 7:69 (or ~ 1:9.86) professor-to-student ratio is comparable to the average of 1:11 among 222 U.S. liberal arts colleges, as [surveyed by the U.S. News](#) in 2016.

Professors have somewhat unusual roles under DRBU’s educational model. Therefore, academic preparation and expertise in a specific academic discipline is not a primary criterion that DRBU uses in hiring and evaluating its professors, beyond the basic requirement of a post-baccalaureate degree. The current group of 13 active professors all have advanced degrees—including nine who have earned a doctoral degree from external accredited institutions—in a wide range of academic fields, such as Buddhist studies, philosophy, rhetoric, history, education, molecular biology, material science, religious studies, and Southeast Asian studies. Eight out of the 13 active professors have taught at other higher education institutions, though only two have prior experience teaching courses in the style of “Great Books” programs or institutions.

Currently, the gender, ethnicity, and age diversity among professors is comparable to that of the student population (see [Attachment 4.10](#)). The WSCUC SAV1 reviewers found, during their March 2016 visit, that “DRBU faculty members are qualified and have the appropriate academic credentials needed to teach.”

Because professors’ primary responsibility is teaching in the two degree programs, and these two programs are both all-required and sequentially built, projecting staffing needs based on the total number of courses offered in a semester is a relatively straightforward matter. The table below shows the minimum number of FTE professors needed to cover all the classes in the two programs through 2020-2021, with the following premises: 1) DRBU admits only one cohort per program in each annual admission cycle during this period; 2) with development, professors will teach out of their areas of academic preparation; and 3) each FTE professor will teaches 12 units per semester as stipulated in the DRBU Professor Plan of Employment (MA courses are three units each, and the vast majority of BA courses are four units each).

ACADEMIC YEAR	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Total # of courses	16	20	24*	24*	24*
FTE professors needed	5	6	8*	8*	8*
Actual FTE professors	7	7	8*	8*	8*

*Projected numbers

DRBU is committed to meeting at least the minimum staffing needs, if not more, to allow new professors time to adjust to DRBU’s discussion-centered pedagogy. This commitment requires 1) the dean and the teaching faculty to perform a more nuanced analysis of staffing needs that also takes into consideration training of professors by co-teaching arrangements; course development; fluctuations in administrative responsibilities that might demand some professors’ time; and transitioning of some of the instructors to professors; and 2) that DRBU adopts more deliberate teaching faculty recruiting and retention practices.

Despite the challenges and the steep learning curves associated with reorganizing a university and starting two new programs, the teaching faculty has seen no turnover since 2010. All

professors have been with DRBU in different (teaching or administrative) capacities for at least four years, and five have served for at least 10 years.

Attracted to DRBU's mission and education vision, these professors came to DRBU through personal connections and not through formal recruitment campaigns. The WSCUC SAVI Visiting Team found this development remarkable, and summarized it well in its report: "The transition [from old to new programs] has required intense collaboration, deliberations, and consensus decision making; and the staff, administrators, and faculty have thrived in this atmosphere of opportunity and creativity. Ultimately, there is something special, which has kept people demonstrating a high caliber of intellect and skill at DRBU that goes beyond just being committed to the mission and vision."

While DRBU plans on maintaining the spirit of organic growth, it recognizes the importance of thoughtful and dedicated outreach and recruitment efforts to grow the teaching faculty, in response to the program's anticipated enrollment increase. A short "job description" of professors posted on DRBU's website, which is a result of the Faculty Review Committee's work on review process for professors, is a welcome and important first step in bolstering the outreach and recruiting efforts for professors.

Another area that DRBU will study carefully is the compensation structure for professors. Currently, the university has a modest and flat salary structure. The president and a junior professor, for example, earn essentially the same salary, which is comparable to that of a new teaching faculty member at St. John's College or Thomas Aquinas College. The dedication of faculty and staff to maintaining the current salary structure has afforded DRBU financial flexibility to continue its growth and to offer generous financial aid to its students.

The WSCUC Visiting Team lauded the use of this salary structure as emblematic of an approach of leadership that "inspires integrity, high performance, appropriate responsibility, and accountability" and one that sets "the golden standards of equity." However, the team also cautions that DRBU might have to consider changing the system to "grow and continue to attract highly qualified faculty and administrators." DRBU will pay careful attention to the external environment in the next several hiring opportunities and use the evidence to inform a decision in this area.

List of Attached Evidence for Section Four:

- 4.1 [DRBU Professor Plan of Employment](#)
- 4.2 [Excerpt from Catalog - Toward a Classics Curriculum](#)
- 4.3 [Faculty Committee Membership](#)
- 4.4 [Professor Workload Form](#)
- 4.5 [Excerpts from Bylaws & Faculty Governance Manual - Faculty Responsibilities](#)
- 4.6 [Excerpt from Faculty Governance Manual - Standing Committees & Administrative Council](#)
- 4.7 [Professor Evaluations Spring 2015](#)
- 4.8 [Proposal Submitted Faculty Review Committee and adopted in Apr 2017](#)

- 4.9 [Excerpt from Faculty Governance Manual - Appointment & Absence of Dean of Academics](#)
- 4.10 [Demographics of Professors and Students](#)
- 4.11 [“What is a Professor at DRBU?”](#)
- 4.12 [DRBU Professor Handbook](#)
- 4.13 [DRBU Professor Plan of Employment \(annotated\)](#)
- 4.14 [Guide to Preparing for your Professor Review Procedure 2017](#)

Section Five. Sustainable Practices

(Please refer to [Attachment 1.5](#) Self-Study Report Template for suggested prompts to this section)

DRBU's rolling admission policy, application requirements, and other information related to admission to the MA program is published in the DRBU Catalog ([Attachment 5.1](#)) and on the University's website. [Attachment 5.2](#) is the application form for the MA program. In summary, application requirements for the MA program are:

- Graduation (or presumption to have graduated prior to enrollment) from college, with a baccalaureate degree.
- Completed admission application form, including essays.
- Two letters of recommendation.
- Official academic transcript(s).
- An in-person or video-conferenced interview with members of the Admissions Committee.
- Submission of standardized test scores (highly recommended but not required, with the exception of the Test of English as a Foreign Language [TOEFL], on which a minimum score of 80 iBT is required for applicants who speak English as a second language).

DRBU's admission practice aims to give careful consideration, through a non-competitive, rolling process, to each applicant, and to evaluate each applicant's qualifications to attend the MA program on his or her own merits.

The Admissions Committee consists of three professors and four ex officio members—the Director of Admissions and Financial Aid, the University President, and the Deans of Academics and Students. It makes decisions by a simple majority of the professors on the committee. The committee considers each application holistically, to determine whether an applicant will be successful in the MA program and will be able to contribute positively to the DRBU community.

DRBU's response to CFR 1.4 describes several factors used in considering an application, which can be boiled down to two criteria that Admissions Committee members consider in making a decision: 1) the applicant's understanding of and interest in DRBU's unique educational model and campus environment, and 2) the applicant's academic readiness.

Applicants who enjoy reading, and who exhibit intellectual curiosity, enthusiasm about learning, openness to stimulating dialogues, and a willingness to be challenged are likely to meet the first criterion. The program is looking to serve students who wish to study Buddhist texts at the graduate level but in a different model than existing Buddhist Studies graduate programs: with a strong emphasis on hermeneutics, the program aims to attract students who have a sincere interest in engaging Buddhist and other texts to help frame and inform their own philosophical assumptions and interpretive strategies. Instead of merely asking questions about these texts, students hopefully are receptive to the larger questions involved in the program's courses: how do we interpret texts; how do different traditions provide interpretive frameworks; how do we as individuals approach each other in the process of shared inquiry, and how can we expand and possibly challenge our own views and interpretive strategies?

Because the MA program is new and uses a somewhat unique educational model, Admissions Committee members have not been able to rely on a history of many graduates and students to draw precise inferences based on data in assessing any one applicant's academic readiness for the program in question and the applicant's actual understanding of and interest in DRBU's educational model.

In the future, a combination of increasing student enrollment and a higher number of graduates from which to draw data; careful tracking of application data and analyses to correlate these data with student success; and information and advice, including indicators of success from DRBU's peer institutions, will help the Admissions Committee develop and refine its own set of success indicators for making admission decisions.

DRBU adopted a commercial student information system (SIS) with an integrated admission module prior to launching the new MA program and has been using it to track application data. The presence of three professors on the Admissions Committee provides an important source of direct qualitative feedback on student success and will also help shape the set of indicators of success.

Due to the unique nature of the MA program, DRBU does not accept transfer credits from other institutions. The MA curriculum is fully integrated and built sequentially. Individual strands are not studied in isolation from each other. All students follow the same prescribed course of studies. Therefore, degree students are admitted only as first-year master's students. DRBU's transfer policy as described above can be found in the "Transfer Credits" ([Attachment 5.3](#)) and "Admissions" ([Attachment 5.1](#)) sections of its catalog.

Prior to the program's launch in 2013, the faculty planned to enroll one cohort of a maximum of ten students in the subsequent five years. The MA program has matriculated six, six, ten, and seven students for fall 2013 to fall 2016, respectively (for fall 2017, the program expects to matriculate eight students).

With a high graduation and retention rate (see Section 2.B), the program is satisfied with the size of cohort it has thus far. DRBU has improved its student-recruiting capacity, which covers both the MA and the BA programs, in the last two years. First, faculty and staff working on recruiting have identified a strong correlation between campus visits and follow through to submitting an application (and subsequently enrollment). In response, the University has allocated additional resources to creating short-term campus programs and events, so as to attract prospective students for campus visits. For the 2017-2018 academic year, DRBU has also increased the number of staff working on recruiting, from 2.25 FTE to 3 FTE.

Since its inception, the MA in Buddhist Classics program has received a steady streams of inquiries by international students from all corners of the world. This is despite that fact that DRBU does not currently accept international students. DRBU's overseas sister universities have also indicated potential strong demand from their students to apply to DRBU's MA program. The University plans to pursue the opportunity to accept international students after obtaining

accreditation.

DRBU believes that receiving regional accreditation would not only improve DRBU's ability to attract more students to both of its programs, but also allow the University to recruit and reach out to a broader, more diverse set of students. The WSCUC Visiting Team agreed with this observation, noting: "Everyone at the institution realizes, as does the team, that [increasing its enrollment] cannot be taken without accreditation," and further, "accreditation would increase the diversity of students as it has been and will continue to be nearly impossible to recruit students from marginalized groups to an unaccredited institution." (p. 35 [Attachment 1.2](#))

Though, as a whole, DRBU believes that the MA program offers something unique, it does share similarities with two categories of programs: those dedicated to the study of Buddhism or more generally religion; and "Great Books" programs, or more generally liberal arts programs. The enrollment trends in these two types of programs are mixed.

Nationally, enrollment in liberal arts and humanities programs has decreased following the 2008 recession. The increasing professionalization of higher education has also had an impact. According to a [2017 Washington Post report](#), while institutions with enrollment greater than 10,000 students have seen, on average, slight increases in their enrollment since 2010, those with fewer than 1,000 students saw their enrollment drop by an average of 5% during the same time period. Further, the number of small liberal arts colleges operating with a budget deficit rose from 20% in 2014 to approximately 33% in 2017. By comparison, the same measurement dropped from 20% to 13% for large private universities between 2014 and 2017.

Another important measure of colleges' attractiveness to students is admissions yield (the percentage of applicants who choose to enroll after having been accepted). Thomas Aquinas College (at 66.4%) and St. John's College (at 53.5%) ranked in the top eight among U.S. liberal arts colleges in terms of admission yield. These two peers of DRBU perform well above the average admissions yield of 27.2% for liberal arts colleges overall, according to a [2015 US News report](#).

Finally, in February 2017, St. Joseph's College (Indiana) shut down temporarily in an attempt to resolve its financial troubles. During the same week, Thomas Aquinas College, as a sign of its health, announced that it plans to open a second campus in Massachusetts in fall of 2018 (both events were reported in a [newsletter from the Cardinal Newman Society](#)). These divergent events perhaps serve as one data point in how different types of liberal arts institutions are faring in an overall tough environment nationally.

Data on students' interest in study of Buddhist texts or Buddhism, or more generally religions (even if DRBU's MA program is a significant departure from typical buddhist studies or religious programs) are harder to come by. Inferences therefore are more difficult to make. Several anecdotes are included here, in an effort to present a potentially hopeful, albeit incomplete picture:

- UC Berkeley has discontinued its undergraduate religious studies program, citing lack of

enrollment.

- Soka University, a Buddhist-affiliated institution, enjoys one of the best admission yields in the nation among small colleges (61.1%).
- *Yale Daily News* reported in 2017 that, although graduates of religious studies majors have decreased in number (along with other humanities majors), attendance at courses on religions have remain robust, and the department continues to appoint new teaching faculty members and lecturers. While the number of millennials claiming no religious identity is significantly greater than the number claiming no such identity in the previous generation (34% vs. 23%), the chair of Yale's rel.studies department speculates that such an identity has been decoupled from from interest in religions and spirituality.

These anecdotes at best present a mixed picture, though the potential underlying trend in the latter anecdote is encouraging. DRBU's MA program strives for a learning of, from, and through Buddhist texts without necessitating that students possess a Buddhist identity. Taking a step back, given the MA program's projected enrollment in the coming years (fewer than 50 students), interactions with prospective students will likely outweigh any larger trends from the external environment. DRBU will continue to monitor external trends to inform its outreach and recruiting strategies, especially when student enrollment in the MA program approaches its long-term maximum of 100.

B. Allocation of Resources

Student support

Cohort mentors (see [Attachment 3.13](#)) are two professors assigned to each student cohort at the beginning of each academic year. They serve many of the same functions as a faculty adviser would in another institution. Cohort mentors typically meet with the whole cohort together and help students with their academic plans, identify particular academic challenges for individual students, and locate academic support services when appropriate. Students can request individual meetings with cohort mentors.

Cohort mentors refer students' to different student service units, depending on the type of individual concerns. The mentors also report during faculty meetings on programmatic issues and concerns discovered through their interactions with their cohorts. Questions on cohort mentors are included in regular student surveys. Seventy one percent of respondents to the Graduates Exit Survey thought that the program had explained its requirements and expectations clearly to them, and 80% of students who responded to the MA Student Survey were extremely satisfied or satisfied with cohort mentoring. Professors and instructors who serve as cohort mentors are given one unit of course relief per semester.

The program's discussion-driven pedagogy, its residential focus, and its small professor-to-student ratio lead to much formal contact between professors and students. Professors also hold office hours and lead or participate in various student activities where less formal interaction takes place. DRBU impresses its visitors, including the WSCUC SAV1 Visiting Team, as a tightly knit community. However, DRBU has not formally documented types or frequency of less formal interactions between students and professors.

DRBU offers generous financial aid to a high percentage (63% to 78%) of its current MA students (see the later section on financial resources for details).

DRBU is committed to supporting student success with appropriate academic support, campus life services, and other services. Because of the residential nature of DRBU's two programs, students' life on campus is an important part of their DRBU experience. The University has established a non-academic program review process (see [Attachment 5.4](#)) for programs and services that provide support to students outside of the classroom. The program review committee has proposed refinements to the review process for these non-academic programs and services. Similar to its academic counterpart, the non-academic program review process is a cyclical process for evaluating and continuously enhancing the quality and currency of non-academic programs. It shares the same cycle of five years.

For 2016-2017, the non-degree programs that went through this review process include DRBU's co-curricular programs and activities and the academic resource center (ARC), which provides the following programs and services: instructional services (including writing tutoring and instructions for English learners), career services, services to students with disabilities, computer services, and time management workshops. [Attachments 5.5](#) and [Attachment 3.8](#) are the program review self-study reports for ARC and Co-curricular Programs and Activities respectively.

Other non-academic-degree programs will undergo this review process in the upcoming years. [Attachment 5.6](#) is an excerpt from DRBU's WSCUC SAV1 Report, which contains descriptions of important programs and services that support student success. This includes several that did not go through the review process this year, such as student orientation, campus life, residential life, dining, restorative justice, and health and counseling services.

DRBU's student support programs and services received strong affirmation from the WSCUC SAV1 Visiting Team. The team found that DRBU's model of integration is evident in its "bringing together academic and student support areas to help bridge and foster collegiality, improve communication, and align support services for students." This collaborative approach and the community's dedication to DRBU's mission and purpose has contributed to an "ethic of care" that is:

"...grounded in the university's mission and values, and is captured in the institutional learning outcomes (ILO 1). This ethic is visible in all aspects of the student's experience (classroom, student conferences, residential life, work-study program, student activities, etc.). The team notes that by virtue of its pedagogical model and the cohort mentoring role, DRBU focuses on students regarding their academic progress and personal growth. Students participate in institutional change and contribute largely to the decision making processes."

The comprehensive reflections that are afforded by the cyclic review process will assist DRBU as it strives to maintain the practice of this ethic of care while cautiously growing the enrollment of the two programs.

Information and technology resources

The nature of discovery itself is one of DRBU's central concerns. It comes to the fore in the MA program, with its two strands on comparative and Buddhist hermeneutics. Students examine the theoretical frameworks and interpretive strategies that shape how we process and interpret information and experience, and ask the key question: “How do we know what we know?” Many texts are selected for the curriculum because they provide a solid foundation for understanding the ideas, values, and ethos that govern contemporary life and therefore shape every type of discourse and discovery. Texts are often chosen also because they are embedded with sophisticated methods of deep questioning, testing, and affirming.

DRBU’s second ILO helps define the expectations for discovery for DRBU professors and students:

A liberally educated person will appreciate the methods of inquiry and insights suggested by the primary texts, particularly in the study of human nature, the workings of causality, and the complex interconnections among the personal, the social, and the natural worlds.

DRBU does not expect (though it does welcome) the scholarly activities of discovery for students and teaching faculty to go beyond primary texts, mainly those included in the two all-required curricula. DRBU operates two library facilities—the main library and a reading room—that aim to support scholarship activities at DRBU.

The reading room, centrally located in the university building together with all the classrooms and offices, provides ready access to over 2,000 course reserve materials. These include the core collection of texts that are read in DRBU’s MA and BA curricula and those that are closely related to the curricula, as well as relevant subject materials and reference works. It is equipped with a computer and a self-checkout system for faculty, staff, and students, and operates on the same catalog system as the university library. The reading room is open during the same hours as the university building, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Mondays through Fridays.

The university library (see [Attachment 5.7](#)), which is housed in a separate building, has been in existence since DRBU’s founding in 1977. In that period of time, the library has amassed over 50,000 volumes, which mainly supported the six DRBU legacy degree programs that have since been sunsetted. Though the library’s current collection had not been procured to specifically support DRBU’s new primary-source-based degree programs, its large collection of Chinese and Sanskrit language Buddhist, Chinese, and Indian classical texts are good resources for Chinese and Sanskrit language study and translation, important activities in the new programs. The university library’s hours are Monday to Friday 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 to 5:30 p.m., and Sundays from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 to 5:30 p.m.

The university library will relocate to the ground floor of the new university building in fall 2017. This new location will host up to approximately 18,000 volumes, along with study space and offices for library staff. This relocation provides an opportunity for the library staff to gather

from the existing collection books that most directly support the two new programs. This reorganization will make the library collection more manageable for the current small library staff, and help to identify gaps in the collection so as to inform ongoing procurement efforts.

The two library locations together house up to 20,000 volumes. Based on the projection of 70 total students on campus in 2020, DRBU will have a student-to-volume ratio of 1:285. This ratio is comparable to those of accredited institutions offering similar types of programs. In 2010, for example, St. John's College, in Annapolis, Maryland, had 184.08 books, serial backfiles, and other paper materials per FTE student; Thomas Aquinas College had 175.61; and St. Mary's College of California, 76.13, according to the [National Center for Education Statistics' Library Statistics Program](#).

Purchasing decisions for both the library and the reading room are driven by the needs of the university's programs, and are overseen by the faculty Library Committee (see [Attachment 4.6](#)). The Library Committee, which consists of three university professors (as voting members) as well as the University President, Dean of Academics, and DRBU librarian (as ex-officio members), also directs the development of the library collection. This committee interacts with university professors to ensure that the collection is serving their needs as DRBU's coursework is developed and refined.

DRBU recognizes that, among its growing faculty and student population, interest in scholarly activities outside the scope defined by the programs surely exists. DRBU intends to develop library resources to reasonably accommodate this interest and to support personal intellectual pursuits by those in the wider DRBU community. The University has near-term and long-term plans for expanding and enhancing its information and learning resources. The plans and activities for the near term (one to three years) include:

- Library catalog system — The university library staff has, for the past five years, worked on migrating the entire collection from a previous proprietary classification system to the Library of Congress Classification system, while also implementing the Koha integrated library system (ILS). The migration and implementation is near completion.
- Remote access to catalog — Remote online access to the DRBU library catalog became available in fall 2014. Users can also reserve and renew books remotely.
- Interlibrary loan agreements — With the implementation of the Koha ILS near completion, library staff has begun to investigate the prospect of establishing interlibrary loan agreements with other libraries.
- Procurement — To continue building up the core collection of the primary texts and related materials that directly support the two degree programs, the Library Committee and the Office of Academic Affairs have developed a process for professors to request books and materials for procurement.
- Academic journals — Currently, the library makes available a small set of electronic resources to its users (see [Attachment 5.8](#)). The University also began to provide professors with access to JStor digital journal collection in spring of 2017.

Beyond 2018, the most significant project in the area of information and learning resources will

be the renovation and relocation of the main library. The designated site is a 14,500 square foot, single-story structure with high ceilings, ample natural light, and an open floor plan. DRBU anticipates that the new library will be completed sometime in the early 2020s. It will house a collection of (a) Buddhist, Indian, Chinese, and Western classics, (b) language resources, and (c) music to support the BA music strand. In addition, it will make available for viewing the University's valuable collection of rare editions of Buddhist texts, provide space and equipment for practicing language skills, and substantially increase individual and group study space. (See [Attachment 5.9](#) for projected timeline of the library renovation.)

The heart of DRBU's learning activities are its open and direct discussions of primary texts. The most advanced forms of technology needed in class are (with a few exceptions, such as a projector used in language courses), pens, paper, and books. DRBU leaves to the discretion of each class's professor whether to allow use of electronic devices (such as e-readers) in class, a policy published in the catalog (see [Attachment 5.10](#)).

DRBU's teaching faculty has determined that its educational programs require general-use personal computers (PC) with software for Internet access and email; productivity (word processing, spreadsheet, presentation softwares); language learning; and library resources search and, in the case of online holdings, access.

Currently, DRBU has available for student use several computer clusters, with a total of 24 PCs equipped with such software. These computer clusters are also equipped with printers. Given DRBU's relatively low enrollment projection for year 2020 (i.e., 69 students) and the prevalence of computer ownership among today's students, the faculty anticipates that the 24 workstations should be sufficient to meet students' needs for the upcoming academic years. DRBU intends to expand its computer capacity as its student enrollment grows.

The computer clusters in the university buildings are open during the same hours as the building, from 7 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. daily. The clusters in the dormitories are open 24 hours a day. Training on the university's computing resources is available during new student orientation and by appointment through the Office of Campus Life. The university buildings also provide wireless Internet access, which students can make use of through their personal laptops.

The WSCUC Visiting Team noted that DRBU's library "meets the needs of the faculty and student populations especially in light of DRBU's curricular emphasis on the Great Books and professors' expectations that students focus on primary texts, not secondary resources." Overall, the students view the information resources positively, as shown in the following highlights from the results of student surveys:

- 100% of the respondents were satisfied with the IT Services. Students commented they always have everything they need regarding printing and scanning and the IT Staff responds quickly to requests.
- Two students suggested establishing guidelines to make computer labs a more conducive place to study.
- 70% of the respondents rated the library holdings "very good" or "good," while 30% rated

it “fair.”

- 83% of respondents agreed that the KOHA library database system is user-friendly and were satisfied with the support of the library staff.
- 30% rated the library facilities “fair” or “poor.” One respondent commented that the reading room in the DRBU building was great but the main DRBU library was not “a pleasant place to study in.”

Library staff will use the relocation of the main library to the new university building as an opportunity to improve the library as a study area. Similarly for the new computer clusters in the new university building.

Facilities

DRBU operates on the campus of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas (CTTB) in Ukiah, California. The campus is owned by DRBU’s parent, DRBA, free and clear, without legal encumbrances. Several major buildings have been designated to support the University’s education programs. The ongoing and generous financial support from its parent DRBA includes use of a well-equipped campus, which houses classrooms, offices, dormitories, and a library (see [Attachment 5.10](#), the DRBU Charter, and [Attachment 5.12](#), the letter of support from the governing board of DRBA, both of which affirmed the long-term and continuing support of DRBU by DRBA). The BA and the MA programs share all of the current DRBU facilities.

[Attachment 5.13](#) shows DRBU’s facility capacity grouped by functions, projected through 2019-2020. The opening of the renovated main university building south wing (labeled “Building 123” or “B123” on the DRBU campus map; see [Attachment 5.14](#)) in fall 2017 will double or triple the number of classrooms, offices, meeting rooms, library reading rooms, student lounges, and computer rooms.

According to surveys, a large majority (90%) of students view the classrooms positively. However, 60% of them rated study and community spaces as “fair,” “poor,” or “very poor.” The significantly increased capacity in library reading rooms, student lounges, and meeting rooms will go a long way toward addressing students’ concerns on study and common spaces.

Other future facility renovation projects in DRBU’s plans include a science laboratory for the BA program, the university library, a dining facility, and a compound housing the arts complex and the student center.

In spring 2014, DRBU created the administrative faculty position of Director of Campus Planning and Design, to coordinate DRBU’s facility projects. In addition to interacting with external contractors such as architects and construction companies, this director also participates in CTTB’s overall campus master planning process, in order to coordinate DRBU’s facility projects with those of the rest of the CTTB campus. The director provided steady leadership in the prompt and under-budget renovation of the 27,000-square-foot main building south wing, which will be instrumental in accommodating DRBU’s enrollment growth for at least five to ten years.

Staff

Excluding the faculty committees, the following administrators and support staff are responsible for the administration of the academic programs:

- Dean of Academics
- Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
- Associate Dean of Program Development
- Administrative Assistant

An excerpt of the Faculty Governance Manual ([Attachment 5.15](#)) has descriptions for the three administrators, and the assistant provides general support in the Office of Academic Affairs. The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs has oversight over the Academic Resource Center (ARC; see the *Student Support* section above). That office's coordinator and administrator provide services to students with disabilities, as well as career services.

Given DRBU's current small size, many employees wear multiple hats. For example, the dean, the two associate deans, and the administrator for disabilities and career services are also professors, and the ARC coordinator and the academic administrative assistant also provide support to other operations such as admissions and the registrar. Currently, these responsibilities account for two FTE personnel.

Since 2013, there has been no turnover in administrative personnel in the Office of Academic Affairs. The administrators in the office have used the resources budgeted by DRBU to attend training workshops in a wide variety of areas, such as assessment methods, program review, regulation compliance, restorative justice, sexual-harassment awareness and prevention, student information systems, and accreditation.

DRBU uses a simple procedure that provides an opportunity for administrators and support staff to discuss their workload and job responsibilities with supervisors before those are finalized ([Attachment 5.16](#)). DRBU has also piloted a review process for administrative personnel, which began in spring, 2015 ([Attachment 5.17](#)). The review begins with a self-reflection from a staff member, and concludes with a review conducted by a panel consisting of the staff member's supervisor and a peer reviewer of the member's choice. The process asks the staff member to consider how his or her work aligns with DRBU's mission and how effectively his or her responsibilities have been fulfilled. The process also invites the staff member to provide feedback on how DRBU can support the staff member's work and development.

To support senior administrators and respond to the increasing workload that corresponds with enrollment growth, the program has allocated resources with which to increase the administrative assistant workload from half-time to full-time, starting in fall 2017.

Financial Resources

Attachment 3.4.2 contains DRBU's operating budget for academic years 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018, as well as the projected budget for the following two academic years. DRBU

currently offers only two programs, and because it has a single faculty and integrated operation, it is difficult to separate expenditure by program. The DRBU budget has shown consistency with its educational purposes and objectives. Expenditure under the instructional and academic support categories account for the largest percentage (38%) of the total budget. Although these two categories remain flat compared to the overall increase in the budget, this is a reflection of the investment DRBU made earlier in having a higher-than-needed professor-to-student ratio in support of designing and developing the new programs.

In addition to the use and maintenance of a campus and facilities, DRBU receives persistent and generous financial support from its parent organization, DRBA. This includes a grant that DRBU applies for yearly in order to support its operations. Because of this support, DRBU has never operated with a deficit since its inception in 1976. Moving forward, the DRBU Board of Trustees has made a long-term commitment, based on the WSCUC Eligibility Review Committee's recommendation to diversify its sources of revenue. The University's board has committed to a ten-year, \$30 million fundraising campaign, and has been actively recruiting new members who have the experience and capacity to assist in that campaign.

With WSCUC candidacy, DRBU is eligible to participate in federal student financial aid programs, which offers a potential source of future revenue that DRBU has not included in its current financial projections. DRBU offers generous financial aid to a high percentage (63% to 78%) of its current MA students (see [Attachment 5.18](#)), which reflects DRBU's intention to foster socioeconomic diversity within its student population. If DRBU decides to participate in the federal financial aid program, tuition and fees will likely account for a higher percentage of DRBU's revenue, due to aid from the federal programs. However, the decision to participate in such federally funded programs is an important one, which trustees and faculty will revisit regularly.

Another potential source of revenue that DRBU has not included in the current projection is tuition and fees from international students. Since its inception, the MA in Buddhist Classics program has received a steady stream of international inquiries, even though DRBU has not, to this point, been able to accept international students. DRBU's overseas sister universities also indicated potential strong interest on the part of their students to apply to DRBU's MA program. The University plans to pursue the opportunity to accept international students after obtaining accreditation and becoming eligible to do so.

Finally, tuition and fees will become a more significant source of revenue as DRBU takes measured steps to increase enrollment in the MA program, with a long-term enrollment target of 100 students. DRBU has enhanced its capacity in recruiting and outreach for 2016-2017 (see the earlier section on Recruitment and Admissions) and, depending on interest and demand, the faculty will regularly visit whether and when the program begins to increase the number of incoming cohorts it matriculates each fall.

DRBU as well as the WSCUC Visiting team both believe that gaining regional accreditation will boost DRBU's ability to attract students to its programs. The team underscored this observation in its report: "The team was amazed at the quality of students [DRBU] has attracted without

accreditation; and the team realized that while accreditation may not improve upon the high quality of its students, it would increase the quantity of students.” (p. 35 Attachment 1.2)

List of Attached Evidences for Section Five:

- 5.1 [Excerpt from Catalog - Admissions](#)
- 5.2 [DRBU MA Application 2015](#)
- 5.3 [Excerpt from Catalog - Transfer Credits](#)
- 5.4 [Student Affairs Unit Review Process](#)
- 5.5 [ARC Program Review Self-Study Report](#)
- 5.6 [Excerpt from WSCUC SAV 1 Report: Response on Student Service Units](#)
- 5.7 [Excerpt from Catalog - The University Library](#)
- 5.8 [Electronic Resources](#)
- 5.9 [Inventory of DRBU Facility Projects](#)
- 5.10 [Excerpt from Catalog - Policy on Digital Devices](#)
- 5.11 [DRBU Charter](#)
- 5.12 [Letter of Support from DRBA](#)
- 5.13 [Projected Facility Capacity](#)
- 5.14 [DRBU Campus Map](#)
- 5.15 [Description of Responsibilities of Administrative Faculty](#)
- 5.16 [Admin Staff Workload Form](#)
- 5.17 [Pilot Staff Evaluation 2015](#)
- 5.18 [DRBU Financial Aid Profile](#)

Section Six. Summary Reflections

(Please refer to [Attachment 1.5](#) Self-Study Report Template for suggested prompts to this section)

DRBU has gone through a series of self-studies in the recent past: The 2010-2013 Self-Study led to sunsetting six legacy degrees and creation of the two new programs; the self-study of 2014-2016 was conducted in preparation for the WSCUC Seeking Accreditation Visit One and led to DRBU gaining Candidacy status; and the year-long MA in Buddhist Classics program review self-study is now near completion. The latter, though certainly built on efforts from the two previous ones, is different in having been the first academic program review, part of a cyclic process that DRBU has instituted within its long-term, ongoing routines. In this exercise, like the two that came before, the University raised a mirror—a classic metaphor for inherent wisdom, the pursuit of which is integral to the DRBU mission—and much of what it revealed this time was positive, affirming, and encouraging.

Four years after its creation, the body of evidence shows that DRBU's MA program has served the small number of students and graduates precisely as it was designed to: by providing a unique learning experience that merges reading and discussion of Buddhist and European primary classical texts with contemplative exercises, further enriched by its setting within a community of learning that shares a campus with a Buddhist monastery. In the process, students' own active pursuit of wisdom is facilitated through advancement of the program learning outcomes. DRBU's community of faculty and staff, lauded by external reviewers for their qualifications, dedication, and cohesion, is poised to support a healthy growth in enrollment.

Important areas, headlined by recruitment, training and review of teaching faculty, and recruitment of students, require improvement and continuing refinements. Some of these areas, such as support for teaching faculty's transition and growth in the program's somewhat unique model, also demand nuanced analysis and careful planning, so that DRBU and the program can retain their spirit and dynamism while scaling up in size. The following paragraphs are the major findings and recommendations—strengths and areas needing improvement, and initial plans for improvement—from the self-study, with particular attention to the four criteria of the review process: mission alignment, effective learning, teaching faculty quality and development, and sustainable practices.

The ten areas highlighted in the following sections of reflection are all areas of improvement that need to be prioritized over the next 5-year review cycle. This report proposes a tentative timeline to work on each item under the "Initial Plans for Improvement" column. A more detailed prioritization and resource allocation will be presented in the Action Plan after the external review.

Mission Alignment

The self-study found the MA program to be strongly aligned with DRBU's mission. The program's creation was inseparable from the reaffirmation of DRBU's mission and subsequent development of its ILOs and the programs' PLOs during the 2010-2013 Self-Study. The two programs' curricula and classroom pedagogy, under a variation of the "Great Books" model,

were deemed the most compatible vehicle for advancing DRBU's mission and enacting its long-term vision.

DRBU has added a small number of faculty and staff since the launch of the programs, but there has been virtually no turnover in personnel since 2010. This continuation in personnel, DRBU's practice of outcome assessment, and training of new professors through co-teaching arrangement with senior professors have ensured the MA program's continuing alignment with the University's mission.

Other evidence of this alignment includes: the higher percentage of graduates (83%) who demonstrate the ability to appreciate and articulate DRBU's model with some nuance (see Table 3A); the alignment between DRBU's mission and the program's student learning outcome, as published on [DRBU's website](#); and the WSCUC SAVI Visiting Team's strong affirmation that DRBU "is demonstrating how a university can advance its mission and serve its communities on campus and well beyond." (p. 35 Attachment 1.2)

However, DRBU also recognizes that this alignment needs to be actively maintained, especially when the University begins to bring in new faculty and staff members to support the anticipated enrollment growth. The University needs to bolster its hiring, orientation, training, and review processes for faculty and staff, in order to ensure successful recruitment and retention of candidates and employees who have a growing understanding and commitment to the University's mission and programs. (A later recommendation related to the teaching faculty will discuss further implementations underway and initial ideas for an action plan to strengthen DRBU's ability to expand its size while maintaining a clear purpose and strong alignment between its programs and activities and its mission.)

Effective Student Learning

DRBU has developed and practiced a formal outcome assessment system that, along with the high level of interaction between professors and students afforded by the small student-to-professor ratio and the seminar style classes, serves as an essential tool with which the teaching faculty can gauge the effectiveness of student learning. The WSCUC SAVI Visiting Team found evidence of "great effort on the part of DRBU to be ever mindful of student learning and success," (p. 16 Attachment 1.2) and that "DRBU practices its assessment framework" (p. 12 Attachment 1.2).

Professors have engaged, on a semesterly basis, in outcome assessment exercises since the launch of the MA program. This has included two summative assessment exercises involving the Classes of 2015 and 2016, which were the first two graduating classes of the program.

Based on results of direct and indirect assessment studies, the program has shown a satisfactory level of effectiveness in student learning. The results of the summative assessment exercises show that these two cohort of MA students (classes of 2015 and 2016) graduated at the level expected (mostly with 3s) on the PLO rubrics. With the exception of PLO 1, both cohorts also show progress in the learning outcomes between their first and final semesters in the program.

Results of indirect assessment studies also support these satisfactory findings: 100% of those responding to the MA Student Survey 2017 agreed that the program has helped them to develop in each of the four PLOs; and virtually all of the respondents to the Teaching Faculty Survey 2017 observed that the program helped the students to grow in each of the four PLOs.

Finally, the average two-year graduation rate for the first three matriculating classes of the MA program is 86%, and the program’s retention rate (defined as the proportion of MA students continuing onto the second year of the program) is 89%. The near-unanimous sentiment from the teaching faculty reflected in the survey study strongly echoes the reflections and reports of student progress shared in faculty meetings and in hallways and offices during informal discussions among professors.

Because of these satisfactory outcome assessment results and the fact that the MA program was created merely four years ago, the teaching faculty has not made major alterations to the all-required and sequentially built curriculum. On the other hand, the teaching faculty has made concerted efforts to refine and adjust the outcome assessment framework in order to improve its capacity. These improvements have often been made based on findings and recommendations from previous assessment exercises or WSCUC Eligibility and SAV1 reviews. The first part of Section 2B of this report contains a full discussion of these adjustments and their background. These adjustments include improvements to the precision and efficiency of the process; creation of rubrics for program learning outcomes to improve their measurability, along with subsequent refinements; standard-setting for graduation; and enhancement of DRBU’s indirect assessment and quantitative analysis capabilities.

DRBU’s outcome assessment also identifies areas that need improvement. These areas are related to elements of instruction such as curriculum and pedagogy, as well as the assessment framework itself. The improvements to the assessment framework that DRBU has already made are in many cases responses to previous assessment exercises. The following are areas of continued concern and their corresponding initial action-plan ideas:

Areas of Concern	Initial Plan for Improvement
<p>Based on the 2017 assessment workshop results, the rubrics for the four program learning outcomes need improvement. All four rubrics contain dimensions that were difficult to score objectively.</p> <p>Many cells are verbose, poorly differentiated by level, and lack clearly articulated evidentiary standards. In addition, PLO 1 (exercise ethical sensibility) presented additional challenges, as readers often lacked sufficient evidence to score most student</p>	<p>Rubrics for PLOs 2 and 3 were updated in spring 2017 to make them clearer, better differentiated, and equipped with more readily applied evidentiary standards.</p> <p>Form a faculty working group to improve or rewrite the rubrics for PLO 1 in 2017-2018. The group may investigate how best to define ethics for this outcome and how to include ethics in instructions, and develop best practices for soliciting responses relevant to the outcome in student works. This task involves reallocation of some professors’ time, and</p>

works in the sample.	does not involve new resources.
Student progress in PLO 4 (create sustained, coherent expositions and reflections for both general and specialized audiences) is less even, and quality of student writing varies notably dependent on courses. Specifically, student works from Comparative Hermeneutics tend to be the best written.	The Program Review Committee will attempt to understand the variability of writing quality from course to course. The committee may examine practices of assigning written work in different courses, including the contents of writing prompts and practices of grading and providing feedback to students in spring 2018. This task involves reallocation of the committee's time, and does not involve new resources.
100% of the respondents to student survey questions on contemplative exercise, which is a unique component of the program, agreed that contemplative exercises have informed and enhanced their intellectual inquiry. Also, comments left by students in the survey show a strong need for an expansion and deeper integration of contemplative exercises across the curriculum.	Form a faculty working group to improve integration of contemplative exercise across the curriculum in spring 2018-spring 2019. The working group may consider the following related areas: training for teaching faculty to lead contemplative exercises; proportion of class hours; criteria for inclusion; and assessment methods. This task involves reallocation of the working group members' time. It may also involve using the existing budget for professional development to participate or host conferences and workshops. It does not involve new resources.
DRBU to create a robust institutional research function that will plan, organize, collect, analyze, and disseminate assessment information. DRBU's current IR capability is sufficient to handle the small data sample size, but improvements are needed as enrollment grows.	DRBU added a staff member with IR experience in 2017. The new staff member will work with the Program Review Committee and the ALO to bolster and upgrade DRBU's IR function by fall 2018. This involves additional resources in the hiring of the new staff and necessary material costs for setting up the function.

Teaching Faculty

DRBU's first ever MA program review self-study report seems to have allocated a disproportionate number of pages on the program's teaching faculty. DRBU only has one faculty for its two programs, and the quality and development of DRBU professors are integral to student learning in the program. The program's youth also contributes to the more detailed descriptions of systems such as faculty governance and review of professors. These are important systems to maintain and improve the quality and the workings of the teaching faculty overall, and documenting and reporting the process and rationale behind the development of these systems seem like an important inclusion in the report. The next program review self-study will certainly allot less coverage on what will be relatively established systems by then.

The qualified and dedicated teaching faculty is an important strength for DRBU and its

programs. Currently (2017-2018) the University has a strong professor-to-student ratio of 1:4.9. Despite the challenges and the steep learning curves associated with reorganizing a University and starting two new programs, the teaching faculty has seen no turnover since 2010. During that period, the teaching faculty demonstrated a high level of flexibility and inventiveness in creating two new degree programs and developing the supportive governance and administrative systems; making adjustment to teaching under a somewhat unique higher-education model; and transitioning from the creative activity of developing the programs to their day-to-day implementation and operation. The teaching faculty has also shown a strong dedication to the University by accepting a flat and modest salary structure, which has afforded DRBU the financial flexibility to continue its growth and to offer generous financial aid to its students.

Students and reviewers on the WSCUC SAVI Visiting Team recognize the strength and quality of DRBU’s teaching faculty and have provided positive, even laudatory, feedback. The responses to the questions on quality of teaching faculty in the 2017 MA Students Survey and the 2017 Graduates Exit Survey were overwhelmingly positive: 83% of graduates were extremely satisfied or satisfied with the instructional competency of the professors, and one student commented in the survey that the strong teaching faculty here is the major reason he/she chose to join this program.

The WSCUC SAVI Visiting Team found that “DRBU faculty members are qualified and have the appropriate academic credentials needed to teach”. Further, they recognize the “high caliber of intellect and skill” exhibited by DRBU faculty and staff in the creation of the new programs: “The transition [from old to new programs] has required intense collaboration, deliberations, and consensus decision making; and the staff, administrators, and faculty have thrived in this atmosphere of opportunity and creativity.”

A strong and committed teaching faculty is essential to DRBU's long-term well-being. Therefore, both the WSCUC Visiting Team and the program review self-study highlighted areas of concern and recommended actions for improvement with the aim of maintaining the quality of DRBU’s teaching faculty:

Areas of Concern	Initial Plan for Improvement
While co-teaching seems to be an effective method of training for professors, and perhaps necessary as DRBU implements the new programs and builds up the capacity of its teaching faculty, maintaining this scale of co-teaching arrangement is not sustainable beyond the short-term.	The Dean of Academics and a faculty committee should develop a sustainable training system to support transition into the program’s model. The committee may study best practices from DRBU’s peers. The committee should have a proposal by fall 2018. Initial ideas are listed in section 4C. This action plan requires reallocation of some professors’ time. No new allocation of resources is involved.
The faculty is committed to improving the decision-making mechanism to retain DRBU’s value of transparency and inclusion	A working group was formed in spring 2017 and began to pilot different meeting practices, with the aim of addressing the need to seek advice and build

<p>while ensuring efficient functioning of the University and its programs.</p>	<p>consensus widely– while also striving for an efficient and effective decision-making process.</p> <p>Continue the working group’s work to develop meeting and other decision-making practices that balance inclusion and transparency with efficient functioning in 2017-2018.</p>
<p>The July 2016 WSCUC action letter states the following recommendations regarding teaching faculty review and scholarship: “...As faculty are encouraged to engage in a broad range of scholarly and research activity, the university may want to consider providing particular support to encourage them to publish and present papers on the nature and benefit of the institution’s pedagogy.</p> <p>In addition, faculty scholarship needs to be a significant part of faculty review that incorporates the evaluation of both junior and senior faculty members and aligns faculty evaluation with the process for appointing and reappointing faculty.</p> <p>The university should document all faculty policies and processes in a centralized location such as the Faculty Governance Manual to provide DRBU with a clear and comprehensive model of faculty review.”</p>	<p>The teaching faculty adopted the Faculty Review Committee’s (FRC) proposals to address the Commission’s recommendations in April 2017 (see Section 4C). For 2017-2018, the FRC will continue its work in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assist in implementing the review process for reappointments of professors ● Adapt the process of review for professors with permanent appointment in spring 2018 ● Formalize hiring procedure for new professors ● Propose process for professors to apply for funding for professional development and scholarship activities ● Explore creating legacy categories for instructors who opt not to become professors and clarify issues related to governance and review for such category <p>These actions do not involve adding new or reallocating resources.</p>

Sustainable Practices

DRBU has strong financial support from its parent organization, including an annual grant to support operations and use of buildings and its current campus in Ukiah, California. The Board of Trustees and administration have begun a ten-year, \$30-million development campaign aim, so as to diversify DRBU’s revenue source. DRBU also enhanced its student recruitment capacity in 2016-2017. Both DRBU and the WSCUC SAVI Visiting Team believe that a healthy growth in enrollment, both in terms of quantity and diversity, is important to “ensure [DRBU’s] sustainability and improve the quality of its education” (p. 37 Attachment 1.2).

DRBU has a strong portfolio of facilities for its two relatively young programs. Students express overall satisfaction with classrooms and other facilities. The opening of the new university

building south wing in fall 2017 will help address concerns that students and other users have raised about the lack of study and common spaces. The opening of the new building will also allow the relocation of the main library, which serves as an opportunity for the library to organize its collection so as to best support the MA and BA programs.

DRBU has a wide range of programs and services that support student success, including a strong financial aid program. The WSCUC SAVI Visiting Team found this to be an area of strength for DRBU, affirming its “ethic of care” (p. 36 [Attachment 1.2](#)).

DRBU has developed a non-degree program review process and is in the process of refining it. Different programs and service units will undergo this program review process on a regular five-year cycle. This year, Co-curricular Programs and Activities (which is responsible for lectures and workshops related to the academic programs) and the Academic Resource Center (which provides academic support services such as tutoring and career services) performed the self-study. These reviews will help maintain the high quality of support witnessed by the Visiting Team. The following table highlights areas of concerns in sustainable practices and their corresponding initial action-plan ideas:

Areas of Concern	Initial Plan for Improvement
<p>The WSCUC Visiting Team recommends that DRBU grow its student enrollment both in quantity and diversity to sustain the long-term health and quality of education of DRBU’s programs.</p> <p>DRBU and the Team agree that initial accreditation will bolster DRBU’s recruiting efforts: “Everyone at the institution realizes, as does the team, that [increasing its enrollment] cannot be taken without accreditation,” and further, “accreditation would increase the diversity of students as it has been and will continue to be nearly impossible to recruit students from marginalized groups to an unaccredited institution.”</p>	<p>DRBU has increased its budget for short-term campus programs and events, so as to attract prospective students for campus visits. This responds to the admissions and recruiting team having found strong correlation between campus visits and application and enrollment. DRBU has also increased the number of staff working on recruiting from 2.25 FTE to 3 FTE.</p> <p>The admissions and recruiting personnel will update DRBU’s overall outreach and student recruitment strategy in 2017-2018 for the next five years, including considering recruitment of international students (after DRBU gains initial accreditation) and how to reach out to a diverse set of students. The planning does not involve adding or reallocating resources. The updated strategy may require additional resources to further enhance capacity for recruitment.</p>
<p>DRBU is on the verge of having a shortage of dormitory rooms for female students on campus. Based on the residential nature of the program, this impending shortage will</p>	<p>DRBU Facilities Team has created a plan to increase the number of dormitory rooms for women to 40. DRBU and the Facilities Team need to prioritize this project in 2017-2018, so as to meet enrollment</p>

<p>impact student enrollment growth.</p>	<p>growth. This action may require additional resources for fundraising.</p>
<p>Currently, the University has a modest and flat salary structure. The president and a junior professor, for example, earn essentially the same salary. The dedication of faculty and staff to maintaining the current salary structure has afforded DRBU the financial flexibility to continue its growth and to offer generous financial aid to its students.</p> <p>The WSCUC Visiting Team lauded the use of this salary structure as emblematic of an approach of leadership that “inspires integrity, high performance, appropriate responsibility, and accountability” and one that sets “the golden standards of equity.”</p> <p>However, the team also cautions that DRBU might have to consider changing the system, so as to “grow and continue to attract highly qualified faculty and administrators.”</p>	<p>DRBU will form a working group of faculty and staff members to study long-term compensation structure for DRBU. This is a complex task that requires weighing multiple factors, such as DRBU’s long-term financial strength, benefits and disadvantages of different structures, and DRBU’s ability to attract and retain quality faculty and staff members. The timeline for this action plan is five to eight years, but the group needs to begin to gather evidence right away. This requires no reallocation or addition of resources in the short term, but may require reallocation of group members’ time later.</p>