

## **REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM**

For Reaffirmation of Accreditation

**To DOMINICAN SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY**

February 26 – 28, 2025

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The team evaluated the institution under the 2023 Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

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## **Section I – Overview and Context**

### **A. Description of Institution and Accreditation History**

#### About Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology

The Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology (DSPT) was founded in Oakland in 1932 as the College of St. Albert the Great. The College moved to the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) campus in Berkeley in 1976. Subsequently, the name was changed to DPST in 1978 and in 2004 relocated to 2301 Vine Street, Berkeley, California.

The mission of the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology is to prepare religious, clerics, and laity for academic and apostolic vocations. DSPT serves a mission rooted in the four pillars of Dominican life: community, prayer, study, and Ministry of the Word. DSPT is a private, four-year California not-for-profit corporation. The school is a member of the Graduate Theological Union (GTU), a consortium of theological schools of different faith traditions, is a ministry of the Western Dominican Province (WDP), and a member of the international Order of Preachers. The Dominican Order provides guidelines for the school for the initial formation of its members, known as “friars” or “brothers.” The Order’s outline of the requirements for intellectual formation, *Ratio Studiorum Generalis*, is used by DPST to develop learning outcomes.

DSPT offers to a combination of over 50 Dominican friars and lay students a postbaccalaureate certificate, a GTU Common Master of Arts, a Master of Arts in Philosophy, a Master of Arts in Theology, a Master of Divinity for Clergy, and a Master of Divinity with a Master of Arts in Theology option. The friars are those students who have already sworn some vows to the Dominican order and are augmenting their professional preparation through study in these degree programs. Lay students are not admitted into the MDiv program; they have not sworn holy orders. Lay students may, however, study and attain degrees in the other DSPT programs.

#### Accreditation History

The Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology has demonstrated several decades of commitment to academics and their faith, and respect for accreditation, beginning with WASC in 1964 and the Association of Theological Schools in 1978. DSPT was granted Initial Accreditation by WSCUC in 1964 and was most recently reaffirmed in 2019 for six years. In addition, DSPT was granted accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) for a period ending in 2030. There are continued institutional efforts to place tradition and shifting contexts in dialogue with stakeholder feedback regarding current challenges.

### **B. Description of Team’s Review Process**

In mid-August 2024, the team chair engaged in a video call with DSPT’s interim president, who provided an introduction to the school and its members, and information regarding the upcoming visit. Shortly thereafter, the team held its first meeting to review the institution and the review process. Assignments were identified for team members to review documents provided by DSPT in preparation for the Offsite Review (OSR) conference call in September 2024. Concluding the team’s review, the president and additional DSPT members attended the call to receive the team’s commendations as well as to be informed of the key issues during the February visit. Following discussions guided by the completion of

the OSR worksheet, DSPT was requested to submit additional material to support lines of inquiry. In January 2025, the team reviewed and finalized the visit schedule in collaboration with the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO).

During the Onsite Accreditation Review in February 2025, the team met with DSPT's Interim President, Academic Dean, Chief Financial Officer, Director of Institutional Research / Accreditation Liaison Officer, members of the Board of Directors, staff, faculty, and students. Also included was monitoring of the confidential email account. DSPT engaged in comprehensive interviews with the team regarding accreditation review topics.

The schedule was adjusted during the visit and the team expresses appreciation for the quick response of changes and for the additional documentation. The exit meeting occurred on February 28, 2025, and was well attended by DSPT.

### **C. Institution's Reaffirmation Report and Update: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence**

The report from DSPT is organized, detailed, and clearly written to portray the institution. Their report reflects the institution's commitment to accreditation. The report shows evidence that DSPT is committed to responding to suggestions for improvement and change. The institution, including faculty, staff, and administrators have been engaged in thoughtful, honest, and mission-driven reflection about its current context and have contributed to the review process.

The responses include a review of the issues and a developmental plan for identifying an analysis for change. The plan includes the collaboration of DSPT faculty, staff, and board as appropriate. The documentation included provides evidence indicating the stages of their development to date.

The institution demonstrates a commitment to its tradition as well as an openness to improvement. The report notes challenges with lay enrollments, changes in faculty and staff, and GTU's changing status in their involvement with DSPT.

The institution has been working to become more systematic in its efforts to gather and analyze evidence. The use of Populi has given DSPT data support which is used by academics and the registrar's office. The data use supports the institution's actions, though sometimes there is a need for more concrete plans and integration of assessment efforts.

It appears the DSPT has made a concerted effort to be responsive to issues and to do so in a progressive way to support their degrees and evidence of student achievement. This commitment was expressed in both the writing of the report and through onsite interviews. There was recognition expressed about the journey of DSPT to use the accreditation process to develop progress for external and internal reasons. Faculty noted their involvement in using the ePortfolio and contributed to discussions such as plans for consolidating student learning outcomes at the course level and programmatic level and disaggregating results by student types. Use of detailed rubrics grounded in learning outcomes demonstrates that there is more effort being placed into the review of student learning which should demonstrate academic improvement by both faculty and students. Also, changes in administrative and faculty stability may facilitate the systematic collection of additional learning outcome data. Students are in the early stages of learning about the ePortfolio.

## **Section II – Evaluation of Institutional Report**

### **A. Response to Previous Commission Actions**

A review team conducted the last accreditation visit to DSPT from March 5-7, 2019. The 2019 AV review team noted a few areas of concern, many of which are common to smaller, more focused institutions. Some of these have already been acted upon by DSPT. Others, such as the distribution of students by gender, may benefit from longer term planning and implementation. FTE for women students remains comparatively low (half of the average for the ATS peer institutions). Progress has been made with regard to diversity by race and ethnicity. There is growth among Hispanic students and consistency in the numbers of Asian students; international student numbers are increasing. The number of lay students compose 20% of the population.

Perhaps the strongest immediate concern was that overall costs are increasing by 25%. Tension occurs between accessibility of services and maintenance of costs. In addition, significant leadership turnover within the past year and reliance on faculty to fill non-instructional roles strains available human resources and may cause burnout for remaining faculty and staff.

The 2019 AV review team's visit was followed by the WSCUC Commission's review on June 28, 2019. Consequently, an Interim Report was requested from DSPT, due March 2022, requiring the following to be addressed:

1. A comprehensive strategic plan
2. A strong plan for strategic enrollment management including links to market research
3. A coherent vision for student learning and success
4. A more fully defined co-curricular program
5. Defining roles and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees and Board of Corporate Members
6. A systematic Institutional Research
7. A systematic program review and assessment, including an assessment leader

The findings of the Interim Report Committee (August 2022) commended DSPT for: 1) the development of promising curricular mapping and engagement of faculty in the process; 2) using assessment to identify gaps in student learning; and 3) the development of the MA in Theology. Five sets of recommendations followed: 1) improve use of external reports; 2) develop the strategic plan to include a strong emphasis on enrollment management; 3) develop a budget to accompany planning including metrics and benchmarking; 4) apply lessons learned from the Math-M program to planning and develop closer links between market research and enrollment management; and 5) continue progress made in assessment, deepening practice and consider identifying an assessment leader, perhaps from the faculty, who can take leadership and stay current on related literature.

In response to recommendations, DSPT has undertaken additional quality improvement actions. To support more effective strategic planning, a consulting firm, VeraCruz, was hired to review organizational structure and to become more concrete in planning. DSPT noted that the VeraCruz report provided parallel direction for their planning to the WSCUC 2019 Commission review. DSPT also used assessment to diagnose any gaps in student learning and to offer student-initiated co-curricular

activities, mostly faith-based, with newly hired staff. Faculty became engaged in curricular mapping, identifying the need for new rubrics. New learning and educational management tools were acquired including Populi and an E-portfolio. Amongst major changes, DSPT's two boards were merged into one, and an invitation for applications for the position of president resulted in the current review of applications by DSPT and by the Dominican Province.

The Interim Report Committee's recommended action was to proceed to the Offsite Review in Fall 2024 and Accreditation Visit in Spring 2025.

## **B. Institutional Essays**

### **Standard 1 - Defining Institutional Mission and Acting with Integrity**

#### Institutional Purposes

The mission of the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology (DSPT) is to prepare religious, clerics, and laity for academic and apostolic vocations. The faculty strive to instill the values embodied in institutional goals into their teaching and research: Intellectual humility, charity, and compassion in service to others, faith in the Gospel and an active reliance on divine providence, and fortitude and assiduous study in the service of truth. Desire for collaboration with other institutions is guided by mission, and transparency is valued and cultivated.

The institution understands and articulates its mission, essential values, and culture. (CFR 1.1) Grounded in the philosophical and theological tradition of the Dominican Order and the larger Roman Catholic Church, DSPT is characterized by its mission-driven focus on respectful engagement of the diversity of ideas and attention to the signs of the times. The culture of the institution engages its mission by offering distinct degree programs in keeping with its mission and values. In response to prior feedback, the school has undertaken to build a comprehensive strategic plan based on both internal and external data collection. There are four institutional goals within detailed rubric for degrees to support the determination of success of all students. Through demographic data analysis, steps are being taken progressively to align marketing with mission. The institution demonstrates integrity and transparency (CFR 1.3) in its operating policies and in its business practices. (CFR 1.4)

Some organizational challenges are endemic to smaller schools, and DSPT is experiencing some of the effects of size. Also, the specialized focus of the school has certain effects on recruiting and enrollment. For example, women only constitute 15% of the full-time faculty and lay women constitute only 10% of the students. Though some aspects of broadening recruitment over the past few years have been successful, there are still elements, for example, representation in terms of students and faculty of diversity, equity, and inclusion that are underdeveloped. (CFR 1.2) Additionally, graduation/ career pathways outcomes (within one year of graduation) are less robust than other ATS institutions.

One longstanding characteristic of the Catholic faith has been its adaptability in the face of external change while maintaining its clarity of mission. As the ongoing strategic direction of the institution evolves, DSPT may wish to periodically recalibrate goals, outcomes, measures, rubrics, and course content to maintain currency and integrity of philosophy and theology education in the face of change.

## Integrity and Transparency

Integrity and transparency in operations is evident in DSPT's focused efforts to develop the new strategic plan. Direction was incorporated from the Vera Cruz Report, data analytics, and budgeting planning. Multiple DSPT constituents were involved and specific groups provided feedback. Faculty will be involved in a confirmatory process in the coming months, as will the new president.

Many of the challenges to DSPT are external rather than internal. The school was required to make changes in response to loss of Graduate Theological Union services. The integration of the new DSPT services into the strategic plan may assist with the continued effectiveness of these services. While the school has already made several partnership arrangements to mitigate changing conditions, this may be a continuing area of opportunity into the future. The institution also is working to develop more consistent communication to its internal and external constituents. (CFR 1.7)

Academic freedom is delineated in the DSPT Faculty Handbook (in progress) and in the DSPT Student Handbook. (CFR 1.6) DSPT modeled integrity and transparency throughout the reaffirmation process, answering questions with candor and thoroughness and providing every document requested. Members of the community graciously extended themselves to host the review team in both scheduled and follow-up conversations. (CFR 1.8)

## **Standard 2 - Achieving Educational Objectives and Student Success**

### Degree Programs

DSPT offers three distinct Master of Arts degrees: MA Philosophy (MAPh), MA Theology (MATH), and Master of Divinity (MDiv). The organizational structure and content of these degrees are guided by the intellectual formation requirements of the Dominican Order, specifically stated in the Ratio Studiorum Generalis (2017 RSG), the Ratio Studiorum Particularis (RSP) and, where applicable, the Program of Priestly Formation (PPF, 6th edition) published by the US Catholic Bishops. DSPT offers two additional master's pathways: qualified students may also enroll in a concurrent MA study option (CCMA) or a concurrent Master of Divinity/MATH option.

The degrees offer coherent, comprehensive, and intellectually stimulating educational experiences as they are rooted in DSPT's four pillars: community, prayer, study, and the Ministry of the Word (preaching and teaching). DSPT articulates clear distinctions between these different degrees with respect to their breadth and depth and core competencies (CFR 2.2) as well as the level of educational qualifications required for these programs and levels of student achievement necessary for graduation. (CFR 2.1)

As the only GTU member school offering the MAPH, DSPT engages philosophical inquiry as an important tool for the GTU community, and by extension the UC Berkeley community, to explore the diversity of ideas represented by their members. The MDiv program is limited to Dominican friars who are required to complete the clear set of required courses and related fieldwork. Specifically, many of the core courses required for the MATH are also required in the MDiv degree. In light of this overlap, the MDiv degree analysis focuses on the outcomes and skills related to clerical ministry. Electives in the MA Philosophy and MA Theology invite curricular innovation and allow faculty to bring in emerging questions, new topics, and topics of interest to their research. The electives complement the core requirements and expand the breadth of the programs.

In response to the previous WSCUC team recommendations, DSPT has worked to bolster its systematic quality review practices. The DSPT program review process is defined with eight components including an external review within a 5-year review cycle, a self-study report, and a detailed sample syllabus. (CFR 2.4) The program review is coordinated by the chair of each department (Philosophy and Theology) in collaboration with the academic dean. The program review process, most recently undertaken in 2020 and 2023, has been streamlined. Collaborative exercises involve consultation from faculty, staff, and students and align with the institution's mission and higher learning objectives.

DSPT used a rubric to demonstrate the alignment of degree outcomes for the MAPH and MATH degrees with institutional outcomes and 2017 Ratio Studiorum Generalis. The creation of common rubrics is a good way to develop sustainable and meaningful assessment practice across different courses. (CR 2.9) There has been excellent progress in shifting from an anecdotal to data-driven approach however additional forms of assessment are needed to evaluate learning outcomes. Forms of curricular mapping, where programmatic learning outcomes are mapped to individual courses (both required courses and electives), illuminate the alignment of course learning outcomes and programmatic learning outcomes. (CFR 2.3)

#### Faculty

Faculty have depth and breadth in their academic backgrounds and experiences. They possess the requisite terminal degrees in their respective fields, where some faculty hold degrees in both philosophy and theology. Faculty are accomplished teachers and active scholars as illustrated by their curricula vitae, and they possess the capacity to design and deliver the curriculum, and evaluate, improve, and promote student learning and success. (CFR 2.5) Given the size of the FTE student population and range of curricular options, the faculty is appropriately sized for the institution. Through their course offerings (required courses and electives), advising on requirements (particularly the Regent Studies advisor), regular assessment of student performance (CFR 2.7), and mentoring (including capstone projects and guidance on post-graduation steps and trajectories), DSPT faculty sustain the quality of the academic programs and the institution's educational purposes. (CFR 2.6)

Regular faculty submit annual reports that outline their accomplishments with respect to teaching, scholarship, and service. There is also a schedule for formal reviews, where incoming regular faculty are formally reviewed annually for their first three years and then every three years thereafter. A faculty professional review committee helps assess cases involving faculty promotion in collaboration with the academic dean and president. These processes are faculty-driven as consistent with the peer-review expectations within the wider academy, though these evaluation and promotion processes and the expectations for faculty research, scholarship, and creative activity could be articulated more clearly and more comprehensively. (CFR 2.8)

DSPT has acted upon assessment data to improve the educational experience of students and ensure progress toward their degrees. For example, DSPT found that some MA students had trouble completing their thesis projects within the standard timeline, where several students then left the program to earn money to repay loans. The establishment of the academic forum in 2023 functions to encourage and enhance students' exchange of ideas, develop academic skills, and introduce students to the professional aspects of the academy. In its self-study report, DSPT notes that students cite "workshopping" of their ideas, proposals, and workshops offered in the second year, focus on skills related professional organizations, including development and presentation for satellite sessions at

professional meetings. DSPT aims to continue to modify the academic forum to provide support for students as they complete their thesis projects. (CFR 2.10)

### Student Learning and Performance

Faculty establish the standard levels of achievement for student learning and performance. To ensure that students are completing the necessary coursework, DSPT provides program requirement checklists and thesis and exam option checklists. Each semester, faculty complete an assessment of an individual student's performance in relation to the programmatic learning outcomes. (CFR 2.9) In addition, there are two moments of assessment: a "check in" assessment in the student's second semester and a more comprehensive assessment of academic progress in the student's third semester. In terms of the former, DSPT requires that all MA students complete a research readiness paper (RRP) prior to the completion of their first academic year which is used as a tool for assessing the student's ability to do graduate-level academic research. The process involves a student submitting a course research paper, 15 to 20 pages in length. The instructor evaluates the paper in light of the stated objectives of the RRP review form. The instructor returns the completed form to the advisor, who then reviews the results with the student. The review form makes use of an evaluative rubric that addresses issues of content, research skills, and presentation and style.

As part of the assessment in the second semester, the advisor presents a brief update on the students' progress to the department for wider discussion. It is not clear from the materials provided by DSPT if assessment is done for students who are completing the two certificate programs. In the student's third semester, the faculty advisor provides a more fully developed assessment that draws upon the evaluative rubric used to assess skills for life-long learning and skills for effective leadership. The advisor prepares a report that includes data from the rubric for departmental discussion. DSPT provides guiding questions to structure the departmental discussion around assessments of the student's progress with respect to their acquisition of institutional core abilities and progress toward degree.

As students work to complete their capstone projects, there are multiple forms of assessment. In addition to the faculty advisor who oversees the project, there is a portfolio review committee that reviews student portfolios and theses each academic year. The new ePortfolio/Student Learning and Licensure (SLL) / Watermark platform, launched in fall 2024, will help facilitate the ways in which students understand and document their learning and intention/outcomes of their respective degree programs. The ePortfolio will archive student work and enable students to reflect on their next stage in their professional development. DSPT should consider using a helpful exercise whereby students are asked to identify work from their ePortfolio (e.g., a research paper from a course) that aligns with each of the programmatic outcomes for their respective degree programs. (CFR 2.10) If a student is not able to draw upon any piece of his or her work that supports fulfillment of a specific programmatic learning outcome, that data can help DPST address any lacunae regarding curricular offerings and assist to "close the loop" on assessments.

In terms of students' degree completion in a timely manner, DSPT has employed various mechanisms used to assess student progress toward degree (e.g., assessment portfolios; research readiness papers). (CFR 2.10) The institution indicated a desire to expand on career mentoring opportunities, and the ePortfolio structure will help support students' understanding of their academic skills in relation to career readiness for their next pursuit (e.g., ministry, doctoral studies, teaching, etc.). DSPT has analyzed ATS Graduation Survey and begun alumni outreach. There are certain challenges connected to data collection related to progress in and completion of degree programs. First, the number of lay students within the MA programs remains relatively small; this allows for close student-faculty relationships, but

it creates some impediments for data interpretation and analysis. Second, the Dominican friars in the program do not always pursue a linear pathway in their degree completion (e.g., leaves for international experiences and ministerial duties). Nevertheless, there could be more systematic approaches to the use of institutional data to assess student performance (at the individual and aggregate levels) and its impact on decision making. A good example would include the tracking and analyzing the professional experiences and outcomes of students after graduation. (CFR 2.11) Students' post-graduation outcomes could be leveraged for marketing and recruitment purposes.

#### Student Support

Upon acceptance into one of the degree programs, students are assigned an academic advisor based upon compatibility of area(s) of research interest. After their thesis proposal and committee have been approved, MA Thesis Option students are advised by their thesis coordinator. Students typically meet their academic advisor at least once a semester to contribute to their understanding of the requirements of their academic program. (CFR 2.12) DSPT provides a guide for the academic advising session to help students and advisors identify the course(s) each semester required for the specific program in which the student is enrolled.

Students affirm their availability of resources and academic support through DSPT. There is a wealth of academic resources, including electronic databases, via the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) and Berkeley libraries, through interlibrary loan. DSPT is still adjusting from GTU's shift away from a shared services model. New programming, including lectures and panels associated with the Newman Center at UC Berkeley, has generated increased opportunities for co-curricular programs to promote students' academic and professional development. (CFR 2.13)

DSPT offers a range of services connected to student services, support, and co-curricular programs. The Student Council allows students to organize programs and social events such as regular gatherings in community. At the annual induction ceremony of DSPT's College of Fellows, students were invited to offer responses to a text. The post-pandemic efforts to support the building of community and to provide consistent communication to current students and outreach to alumni are promising, though there is more work to be done regarding the institutional assessment of the effectiveness of its student support and co-curricular programs and services and uses of the results for improvement. (CFR 2.14)

### **Standard 3 - Assuring Resources and Organizational Structures**

#### Faculty, Staff, and Administrators

In conversations with the president and the faculty, there was a consensus that faculty resources are currently sufficient, in terms of numbers, to properly support DSPT's academic programs and the goals of the institution. Both the president and the faculty similarly agreed that recent faculty hires have been of exceptionally high quality. One faculty member attributed this fact to the tough market, with regards to securing a job, for newly graduated doctorates in philosophy, which gives DSPT a competitive edge in terms of attracting and retaining talented philosophers. Reviewers also noted that the location and academic partnerships such as those with GTU and UC Berkeley were also attractive to potential scholars.

Students lauded the distinctiveness of the academic program and the resources available to support their development as scholars and thinkers (e.g., to attend and to present at conferences). The

president did acknowledge that faculty resources are not so sufficient as to render trivial the planning associated with phased retirements or unexpected leaves of absences. The nature of the academic program at DSPT is such that it requires an “all hands-on deck” approach, with faculty members needed to support service activities and committee work, particularly committee work associated with evaluating theses. (CFR 3.1, 3.2, 3.3)

#### Fiscal, Physical, Technology, and Information Resources

In contrast with the consensus that faculty resources are sufficient, there was consensus that DSPT probably needs a single additional budgeted staff FTE in order to simultaneously optimize its admissions and recruitment function and its student support services function. Currently, these functions are supported by a single member of staff. This job, as currently constructed, is particularly challenging because the admissions and recruitment function requires that staff member be away from campus and out and about in the community. The student support aspect of their job is best managed if they are on campus. The president indicated that he is in good faith negotiations with the Western Province Dominican to build this additional staff FTE into DSPT’s budget for the next fiscal year.

Unsurprisingly, given its limited staffing and recent turnover in leadership, the state of policy promulgation at DSPT is very limited. DSPT’s leadership acknowledged, in several different venues, that business processes, human resources policies, and other practices necessary to support continuing of operations are not, in fact, well-documented. The WSCUC team agrees that, over time, DSPT should make the investments necessary to close these gaps, even as the team acknowledges that doing so amounts to “building a plane while flying it.” Closing these gaps will support more effective succession and transition planning, reduce the risk that decision-making is viewed as capricious, and help DSPT be reflective about the policy choices that it is making, rather than reflexively slipping into those choices.

DSPT has essentially adopted a centralized incremental budgeting model, which is appropriate given its small size and level of administrative complexity. DSPT depends on subsidies from the Western Province Dominican, which views DSPT as among its most important projects and has committed the financial resources necessary to cover any operating deficits that would otherwise be realized at DSPT without the Province’s support. (CFR 3.4, 3.5)

While the contours of DSPT’s operating plan fluctuate from year to year, less than 10% of DSPT’s resources come from net tuition and, in fact, virtually no net tuition is generated from lay students. Approximately 20% of DSPT’s annual operating support comes from a payout from its endowment. The endowment payout ratio, which is approved by the board of directors and the Western Province Dominican, follows a fairly standard calculation: 5% of the trailing twelve quarter’s end endowment balances. The endowment is managed through an outsourced chief investment officer arrangement by which DSPT “piggybacks” on the investment management retained by the Western Province Dominican.

The remainder of the resources needed for DSPT to operate are, in practice, effected as a transfer in from the Western Province Dominican, which has its own streams of income. The province’s income comes from, for example, its own endowment, which is substantially larger than DSPT’s endowment, as well as collections from parish churches. While the Western Province Dominican does not undertake an annual external audit of its financial statements, the unaudited financial statements provided to the

review team represent, or suggest, that the annual transfer to the DSPT constitutes approximately 10 to 20% of the Western Province Dominican's operating budget.

The preponderance of evidence suggests that, while DSPT is not financially sustainable as a free-standing entity, the Western Province Dominican is both willing and able to bring resources to bear that result in balanced operating plans at DSPT. There are further anecdotal examples of this "backstopping" relationship: a small on-site library recently saw a flood that damaged sheetrock, floorboards, etc., and the DSPT's operating budget was not well-positioned to support repairs. Instead, the Western Province Dominican provided both fundraising support and liquidity to make necessary and timely repairs.

In many ways, DSPT operates as a subsidiary organization and the Western Province Dominican operates as the parent organization. In such a relationship, the best practice for preparation of the institution support would be to include financial information for both the parent organization and its subsidiary, since adequacy of financial resources for the subsidiary is essentially a function of the adequacy of financial resources of the parent organization. Preparing future institutional reports in this fashion will likely limit unnecessary lines of inquiry and minimize initial confusion among members of the review team.

While DSPT's budget-building process is fairly informal, it is also nimble, which means that it is almost automatically attentive to aligning the institution's admittedly limited financial resources with its mission. The review team discussed the adequacy of DSPT's facilities, as well as its physical, technological, and information resources, during many of its on-campus meetings. DSPT leases its principal site at 2301 Vine Street in Berkeley, California, from the Western Province Dominican. The annual lease expense is nominal, and the term of the lease is 10 years in length, with terms adequate to guarantee operational stability at DSPT should either DSPT or Western Province Dominican give notice of interest in terminating the lease. Western Province Dominican, therefore, takes care of most preventative and deferred maintenance work as part of that lease agreement. In discussions with the staff member most responsible for technology support, and in discussing the adequacy of technological resources with students and faculty, the review team agrees that these resources are sufficient to support DSPT's mission. (CFR 3.6)

DSPT staff frequently "wear many hats," which is not untypical at a smaller institution of higher learning. Consequently, the institutional research function and, therefore, much of the institution's capacity to collect, analyze, and make effective use of data is tied to a person who also serves as assessment liaison officer and a faculty member. While DSPT has made meaningful and sustainable strides in support of data-informed decision-making, and there is more that DSPT can do in this regard, DSPT is likely to always find its efforts in this area somewhat stymied by its staffing limitations and its relatively small number of students.

#### Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes

The WSCUC review team adopts, as a baseline, the WSCUC Governing Board Policy as its understanding of both minimal (and best) practices for governing boards operating underneath the WSCUC umbrella. The governing board at DSPT is called the board of directors; it is the successor entity to a board of

trustees, which was replaced in approximately March 2024. The new board of directors is young and is still working to determine and to shape its practices, policies, committees, traditions, and culture.

Under the system in place at the time of the last WSCUC reaffirmation of accreditation, there was a board of trustees (BoT) and board of corporate members (BCM). The BCM provided the fiduciary function. The BoT was composed entirely of lay members. There was confusion about the role of the BoT. Some members of the BoT thought it was advisory, but it clearly was not. For example, the BoT had to approve the conferral of degrees for graduates. The bylaws were rewritten and restated, culminating in a governance transformation that began taking root in March 2024. The board of corporate members and board of trustees no longer exist *per se*; the board of directors was created. Currently, the board of directors is the sole fiduciary. However, the Western Province Dominican is the sole member of the board of directors. The Western Provincial Council appoints five Dominicans to the board of directors. Those five members of the board of directors then elect up to three more non-Dominican directors. Only the five Dominicans can elect or remove the non-Dominican trustees. Currently, there are seven members of the board of directors, but the board of directors is in the process of identifying and electing an eighth member. (CFR 3.7, 3.8)

The committee structure of the board of directors is somewhat ill-defined and still nascent. There is, in principle, a finance committee, though it does not meet regularly, and it does not seem to be particularly robust. There is no academic affairs committee, though there is a governance committee and an audit committee.

Other practices of the board of directors appeared to the WSCUC review team as unusual. For example, the board of directors hires the academic dean, but plays no further role in the evaluation of that academic dean on a forward-going basis. Presumably, however, the board of directors would then be subsequently involved in a decision to terminate the academic dean. Another example: the president has little input in the agendas for meetings of the board of directors. In fact, the president is only occasionally called into these meetings, even outside of executive sessions, the use of which seems to be limited, if not altogether nonexistent, with this board of directors. (CFR 3.9, 3.11)

Two additional observations that concerned the WSCUC review team were as follows:

- Some members of the DSPT faculty are also members of the board of directors, which means that they both report to the president and also have the president report to them. When pressed on this issue, members of the board of directors made observations about factors that mitigate this apparent conflict of interest: (1) the Dominican members, of the board of directors and of the DSPT, are essentially uncompensated for their work, rendering remuneration considerations moot for purposes of determining whether or not there is a conflict of interest; (2) while the president could certainly terminate members of the DSPT faculty in their capacities as instructors of record or members of the faculty, the Dominican members of the friar have taken vows of obedience and are assigned to do work at the pleasure of the Western Province Dominican; and (3) as governance transformations were contemplated and implemented over the past couple of years, the DSPT faculty insisted that faculty members have strong representation on the board of directors. There are strategies faith-based institutions have used for faculty to serve on the governing board (e.g., the board of directors at DSPT): (1) identify

members of the religious order who, by way of their training or their background, appreciate the distinctive academic mission of the institution of higher learning, and who can faithfully represent faculty interests on the governing board; (2) identify members of the religious order from academic institutions, both from within the province, and also other provinces, who would be willing and able to serve on the governing board; and (3) consider adopting an ex officio (i.e., non-voting) role for a faculty member from the institution on the governing board, who could either be a member of the associated religious order or a lay member of the faculty.

- Having the Western Dominican Province as the sole member of the board of directors presents opportunities for the board of directors to not be free of “undue influence” from external groups, as required by the *WSCUC Governing Board Policy*. In its inquiries, the WSCUC review team endeavored to understand how the provincial council viewed its authority with respect to the authority of the board of directors. The board of directors indicated that the province, as sole member of the board of directors, would ultimately have sole authority over the following matters: selection of the president (i.e., affirming the recommendation of the board of directors); a substantive change in the mission statement of DSPT; mergers, dissolution, or acquisitions of other institutions of higher learning; property disposition and acquisition; and the establishment of entirely new degree programs. Otherwise, the member does not have influence over curriculum, assessment, or the hiring (or firing) of members of the faculty. The WSCUC review team was reasonably satisfied that this partitioning of authority is not unlike the partitioning of authority seen at other WSCUC institutions viewed as satisfying the *WSCUC Governing Board Policy*.

#### **Standard 4 - Creating an Institution Committed to Quality Assurance and Improvement**

##### Quality Assurance Processes

DSPT is developing comprehensive quality assurance processes to guide operational improvements. (CFR 4.1) The WSCUC team reviewed a few of these examples. An initial evaluation of organizational operations using the VeraCruz report led to reconfiguration of the board structure. (CFR 4.5) DSPT has also developed standardized processes and protocols for academic program review, faculty evaluation, and assessment of student learning. DSPT’s strategies for these evaluation systems integrate faculty participation, and they are aligned with the continuous improvement approach. (CFR 4.6) DSPT has been working to institutionalize the use of institutional data in a way that works meaningfully for their size and characteristics. (CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4) There is also evidenced effort in developing an alignment between mission and draft strategic plan as well as from curriculum to course design. DSPT should continue to bring a clear cascading relationship between the macro-level planning through the strategic plan and micro-level implementation of tactics. (CFR 4.1, 4.8)

Assessments of student learning are formative and summative, utilizing both direct and indirect evidence. (CFR 4.1) DSPT has been focusing on the program-level learning outcome rubric development and norming among faculty. Using the standardized rubric, faculty evaluates students’ learning at multiple touchpoints in the Core courses using Watermark assessment ePortfolio platform. This assessment platform streamlined the data collection and analysis including disaggregation in a way that faculty can spend more time on closing the loop. (CFR 4.2) It also enabled DSPT to track lay student learning across time. Evidence collected over the academic year are presented to the faculty in advance

of the new academic year to make necessary changes to course design and pedagogy. (CFR 4.3) Faculty also leveraged the small institutional characteristics to conduct focus group, alumni outreach, and both formal and informal conversation with students to make micro adjustments within courses to improve learning. (CFR 4.3) Examples include expansion of co-curricular experiences such as forum and conference presentations and professional development opportunities to prepare them for teaching careers. Assessment is a highly faculty-led practice at DSPT, and they remain as the first point of contact for students to provide feedback through conversation or on the course evaluation.

DSPT is also working to improve the post-graduation outcome tracking for lay students and develop alumni database. (CFR, 4.2, 4.4) This is an appropriate target population as lay students' career options vary after they graduate. Much of the data disaggregation is based on friar or lay student characteristics, and this is an appropriate and meaningful disaggregation in this institutional context. At a broader level, each academic program is reviewed every three years through the program review process which includes syllabus and curriculum map reviews. This process is self-reflective and framed as an opportunity for continuous improvement. Program review samples submitted to the WSCUC team demonstrate that syllabi are reviewed for hierarchical alignment between program-level learning outcomes and course outcomes in a way a curriculum map illustrates the student learning. (CFR 4.6)

The institution's focus to disaggregate the student learning data by friars and lay student populations makes sense for the types of curricula they deliver, and their desire to develop robust database for post-graduation student pursuits is also on target with the expected educational effectiveness practice. They are making productive progress on norming the faculty to use standard assessment rubrics for program learning outcome assessment. Once a sufficient amount of evidence is systematically collected, DSPT will be able to build strategies to close the loop based on student learning outcome data. (CFR 4.1, 4.5)

Regular faculty are reviewed every year in the first three years and every three years thereafter. The review criteria consist of teaching, scholarship, and service including advising. The review committee is led by the Dean, and all regular faculty participate in voting for promotion. (CFR 4.6) Promotions are approved by the president and the chancellor. There is a desire to clarify the purpose and pace of review after the faculty get to the full professor level. Teaching effectiveness is informed by the assessment of student learning, and the institution offers regular faculty fundings for conference travels. (CFR 4.4) The funding request is on a first come first served basis, and there is limited resource planning strategy to secure or prioritize faculty request particularly for international travels. Faculty workload assignment is also ambiguous when their elective courses get cancelled due to low enrollment after the add/drop period. Transparency in expectations and protocols for requests improves overall work condition and campus climate. (CFR 4.3)

DSPT has made genuine progress toward improving shared governance, including consolidating two boards into one board of directors and clarifying the relationship between the board of directors and the Western Dominican Provincial Council. The team recognizes that the institution is working on balancing the roles and responsibilities among the board of the Directors and faculty. The institution is also navigating multiple documentation revisions - the handbook, bylaws, and independent policies and procedures. To improve clarity and replicability of institutional practices on critical decisions, such as the most recent presidential search procedures, organized documentation practice is desirable.

### Institutional Improvement

DSPT leveraged the past WSCUC accreditation experience to develop quality assurance and improvement plans; its institutional development infrastructure is evolving. It has an essential data gathering function, evident in the enrollment and degree completion statistics submitted in the exhibits. DSPT is able to understand enrollment by gender, race/ethnicity, lay/friars and attrition and graduation rates by program and gender. (CFR 4.2) Given that the size of the MA degrees are on the larger end of the band (48 units), it is important for DPST to monitor lay students' time to degree completion as part of the institutional research responsibilities. (CFR 4.2, 4.4) Responding to a recent increase in lay faculty hire and turnover in staff positions, it is important to expand this basic data depository for faculty and staff records so that the institution has readily available data to understand trends. (CFR 4.4) DSPT has also made efforts to bring more systematic information gathering strategies for decision-making and process development. They submitted to the WSCUC team their outsourced research reports on organizational operations (VeraCruz Report) and relocation feasibility study, program review protocols and samples of completed review packets, and draft employee faculty handbook that details the evaluation criteria. Once the employee/faculty handbook is completed, it should be made accessible on the website.

The draft strategic plan focuses on both student learning and institutional stability, and it is approaching the phase of approvals. In alignment with the draft strategic plan priorities, DSPT has strengthened academic degree offerings, built new partnerships, furthered public engagement, and planned for lay student recruitment to ensure diversity instrumental to student learning. In particular, partnership with the Newman Center has opened various new opportunities and increased DSPT's visibility among the University of California Berkeley community. Collaboration with UCB, such as cross-registration, offering courses for adult learners, and donor funded public lectures, provides students with more opportunities for learning and professional development. DSPT administration and faculty both highlighted the importance of curriculum and faculty development with UCB to facilitate recruitment and retention of both students and faculty. In the event of relocation, preservation of intellectual connection with UCB and GTU would benefit DSPT in order to enact smooth transition and securing resources for robust scholarship. (CFR 4.4) As lay student recruitment is a part of the draft strategic plan; this connection will contribute to recruiting this population of students. To keep these initiatives organized and assessable for their impacts, project management strategies, such as alignment of purpose, tracking mechanisms, assignment of responsibilities, communication of progress, and evaluation of effectiveness, are essential to successfully realize the plan. (CFR 4.1, 4.8) Given that some of these tactics are in the works, DSPT is in a good position to develop an organized way to manage and then measure the strategic plan initiatives.

Program review process and implementation details have been clarified since the last WSCUC reaffirmation of accreditation. It follows the standards of operation which includes self-study, external review, review by an internal committee, and action planning. (CFR 4.1, 4.6) The policy requires all three degree granting programs to be reviewed every five years, but they are practically on a 3-year review cycle partly due to the timeline with the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada. Their self-study is framed as reflective exercise, and its content has emphases on teaching and learning quality, standards of student performance, and evaluating the

alignment between the course design and program-level learning outcomes. (CFR 4.6) Assessment of student learning is also integrated into the program review process. As DSPT is not tuition dependent, financial aspects of the operations or new academic program development in response to the market demand are not in the program review. Given the size of the institution, non-academic programs are currently not reviewed in a systematic manner, but the library as DSPT's major academic resources are reviewed every three years through the GTU's library review process. (CFR 4.1) Although both faculty and students expressed a strong sense of community and academic rigor at DSPT, a systematic gathering of evidence on campus climate to inform co-curricular programming may be beneficial to the institution. (CFR 4.3)

It is evident that faculty feel that their voices are heard in decision making either through frequent communication from administrators or by actively participating in administrative matters. As noted in the governance section, there is a significant overlap of faculty also serving on the board of directors, which makes it challenging to keep appropriate distance between the board and the institution. In the present system, decisions could be made between faculty and the board without intentional and active engagement of the president on the board. Ongoing institutional improvements might include further professional board development activities to refine and focus the new roles and relationships. DSPT benefits from developing robust onboarding procedures for the board so that they understand the mission and philanthropic nature of the institution. Such onboarding is best run by third party. Evaluative practice of the board's function is a consideration after the onboarding structure is in place. (CFR 4.7)

### **C. Reflections - Synthesis of Insights as a Result of the Reaffirmation Process**

The Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology presented a self-study that was focused, succinct, and based in evidence and reflective analysis. DSPT demonstrated a coherent understanding of the current state of the institution in relation to past development, to future goals, and to the Standards. There was ample evidence that the conclusions reached through the peer review visit will inform and enhance institutional practice and outcomes and will catalyze future development.

There were many areas of good practice already in evidence, such as curricular review, student support, and ongoing performance evaluation and assessment. Institutional practices were rooted in the mission. The institution has engaged in multiple rounds of reflection and renewal with their multiple evaluators. The institution has been engaged in thoughtful, honest, and mission-driven reflection about its current context (strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities). The fluidity of GTU's declining status, the challenges with lay enrollments, and the space/location question all received attention in the self-study report and during the visit. The institution demonstrates a commitment to its tradition as well as an openness to improvement.

Future gains in administrative stability may provide additional support for documentation of systems and processes, increasing transparency and replicability of information. Streamlined processes for recruitment and other synergies between the Western Dominican Province and the Priory of St. Albert the Great (PSAG) will contribute efficiencies, as will DSPT's flexible and effective partnering with other organizations. The highly qualified and dedicated faculty and staff are valuable assets to the organization.

As the revised board structure continues to evolve and mature, the institution may benefit from archiving board minutes and other central internal documents that will be used to memorialize essential decisions regarding system and processes. For continuing professional development of the board, an organization such as the Association of Governing Boards or American Council on Education can provide guidance about board development, best practices, and evolving conditions around board service.

#### **D. Compliance with 2023 WSCUC Standards**

DSPT submitted their completion of the Compliance with WSCUC Standards Worksheet. DSPT assessed their compliance with and provided evidence for each Standard's CFR.

##### Standard 1

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

##### Standard 2

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

##### Standard 3

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

##### Standard 4

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

Final determination of compliance with the Standards rests with the Commission.

#### **Section III – Other Topics**

There is no applicable information for this section.

#### **Section IV – Commendations and Recommendations**

The team commends the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology for:

1. Its continuing commitment to support the WSCUC reaffirmation of accreditation process, described by both faculty and administrators as an intrinsic learning experience that drives positive growth and development of the institution. (CFR 1.3, 1.8, 2.6, 2.12)
2. The comprehensive integration of its deeply mission-centered and academically rigorous approach to the education of its students, which is authentically grounded in constructs such as intellectual humility, charity, and compassion in service to others, faith in the Gospel, and rigorous study in the service of truth. (CFR 1.1, 1.2)

3. Its ongoing efforts to leverage advantageous partnerships (e.g., library services through the Graduate Theological Union) while maintaining the high quality of its academic offerings. (CFR 2.3, 2.13, 3.6)

The team recommends that the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology:

1. Finalize and begin implementation of the new strategic plan. (CFR 4.8)
2. Document policies, procedures, structures, and workflows to support improved continuity of operations, with efforts that span student services, human resources, and academic program review. (CFR 2.3, 2.4, 4.1)
3. Continue to develop the board of directors and clarify its relationship to the Western Dominican Province, the president, and the faculty, as guided by the WSCUC Governing Board Policy, and take advantage of external resources (e.g., the Association of Governing Boards). (CFR 3.7, 3.8, 3.11, 4.7)
4. Pursue opportunities for ongoing leadership development, as well as proactive and transparent processes for evaluation of individuals in positions of leadership. (CFR 3.3, 3.9)
5. Adopt meaningful and sustainable practices in the assessment of student learning; deployment of institutional data to support evidence-informed decision-making; and tracking of post-graduation pursuits and leveraging this information for marketing purposes. (CFR 2.3, 2.9, 2.11, 4.2)

## Appendix A Federal Compliance Requirements

### Appendix A1 Credit Hour and Program Length Review

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate.)
Policy on credit hour	Is this policy easily accessible? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Where is the policy located? <b>Student Handbook (pp. 29-30) posted on <a href="#">the DSPT website</a>.</b>
	Comments: <b>New student orientation covers the Student Handbook, and they sign acknowledging they have read and understood the policy.</b>
Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour	Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: <b>Class cancellation policy is on the draft Faculty Handbook submitted to the team.</b>
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: <b>The schedule is made available on <a href="#">the DPST website</a>, but it is expected that every syllabus has this information as the standard. Most syllabi had this course meeting schedule (and some along with weekly schedule), but there was a syllabus in the sample provided missing this scheduling information.</b>
Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses <i>Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.</i>	How many syllabi were reviewed? <b>TWO</b>
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? <b>Pastoral Counseling / Theory of Knowledge</b>
	What degree level(s)? <b>MA</b>
	What discipline(s)? <b>Divinity / Philosophy</b>
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: <b>The syllabi are missing the information on the online platforms used to deliver the course, including LMS (Moodle) and telecommunication platform (e.g., zoom).</b>
Sample syllabi or equivalent for other kinds of courses that do not meet for the prescribed hours (e.g., internships, labs, clinical, independent study, accelerated) <i>Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.</i>	How many syllabi were reviewed? <b>One</b>
	What kinds of courses? <b>Capstone</b>
	What degree level(s)? <b>Master's</b>
	What discipline(s)? <b>Philosophy</b>
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:
Sample program information (catalog, website, or other program materials)	How many programs were reviewed? <b>FOUR, including Concurrent MA (Theology and Philosophy)</b>
	What kinds of programs were reviewed? <b>Degree-Granting Programs (MA and MDiv)</b>
	What degree level(s)? <b>Master's</b>
	What discipline(s)? <b>Theology and Philosophy</b>
	Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: <b>Both MA in Philosophy and MA in Theology are 48 units, which on a higher end of the band.</b>

Review Completed By: Makiko Imamura

Date: 2/28/2025

## Appendix A2 Marketing and Recruitment Review

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

Material Reviewed	Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.
**Federal regulations	Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students? ■ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: Yes. DSPT's management confirmed that it is in compliance with section 487(a)(20) of the higher Education Act (HEA).
Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? ■ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? ■ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: DSPT effectively provides clear information about cost of attendance. See, for example: <a href="https://dspt.edu/cost-of-attendance">https://dspt.edu/cost-of-attendance</a> . DSPT is advised to make clearer indications as to the total cost, over the total typical length of time to completion of degree, for each of its degree programs. DSPT's program-specific web pages clearly indicate the typical length of time a student should expect is required to earn particular degrees. See, for example: <a href="https://dspt.edu/ma-philosophy">https://dspt.edu/ma-philosophy</a> .
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? ■ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? ■ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: There is data related to completion rates and placement outcomes for graduates of DSPT at web sites such as this one: <a href="https://dspt.edu/educational-effectiveness">https://dspt.edu/educational-effectiveness</a> . While a greater array of specific examples might be useful, DSPT nonetheless provides prospective students with a sense as to their likely ultimate job placements with language such as follows: "Of those who graduated with a Master of Divinity degree, nearly all are currently employed, and the remaining, approximately 10%, are pursuing advanced degrees. Employment areas include higher education, parish ministry, campus ministry, and diocesan ministry."

\*§602.16(a)(1)(vii)

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

Review Completed By: David J. Hamrick

Date: February 2025

### Appendix A3 Student Complaints Review

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

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Policy on student complaints	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, Is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Where? Yes, in the 2024-25 Student Handbook, which is available on the DSPT website (see <a href="https://dspt.edu">dspt.edu</a> )
	Comments: Specifics of the policy and processes are outlined below.
Process(es)/ procedure	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, please describe briefly: The procedures for student complaints are addressed in different sections of the 2024-25 Student Handbook, which is available on the DSPT website.
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: The Student Handbook includes processes for submitting students' complaints, including Title IX complaints (harassment, discrimination, etc.) (pp. 12-13 and 20-21), FERPA complaints (p. 17), and grade grievances (pp. 22-23). The procedures provide guidance to students related to the DSPT contact, the process of review involved, and the relevant external parties (as appropriate) to support students.
Records	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where? DSPT does not currently have a process of formally maintaining student complaints.
	Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO If so, please describe briefly: DSPT does not currently have a process of formally tracking and monitoring student complaints over time.
	Comments: DSPT is working to build institutional infrastructure and capacity to archive and track student complaints.

\*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)

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

Review Completed By: Jonathan Rothchild

Date: 2/27/2025

## Appendix A4 Transfer Credit Policy Review

Under federal regulations\*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's transfer credit policy and practices.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Transfer Credit Policy(s)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? ■ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Is the policy publicly available? ■ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where? The policy is available in the 2024-25 Student Handbook, which is located on the DSPT website (see: <a href="https://dspt.edu">dspt.edu</a> ).
	Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? ■ YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: The Student Handbook states: "In decisions regarding the awarding of credit for academic work done at other educational institutions, consideration is given to the quality of the institution at which the work was done, the comparability of the content and level of the work to parallel course work at DSPT (where applicable) or to generally accepted academic standards. Consideration is also given to the relationship of the academic work to the program of studies at DSPT" (50). The policy explains processes for students who seek transfer credit prior to matriculation and while matriculated. The policy also differentiates between the three different types of institutions from which credit transfer requests may be considered, and it also addresses extra-institutional and experiential learning.

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

- (1) Are publicly disclosed in accordance with 668.43(a)(11); and
- (2) Include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.

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

Review Completed By: Jonathan Rothchild

Date: 2/27/2025

## Appendix B Distance Education Review

**Institution:** Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology

**Type of Visit:** Reaffirmation of Accreditation Site Visit

**Name of reviewer/s:** Makiko Imamura

**Date/s of review:** 3/17/2025

**Section Completed:** \_\_\_\_B

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

### SECTION B: For Institutions Without Approved Distance Education Programs

1. Courses reviewed (as appropriate; please list)

**PH 1065: Theory of Knowledge**

**PS 1016: Pastoral Counseling: Process and Skills**

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

**Meeting with the Dean and ALO on the topic of program review and assessment took place during the site visit. During this meeting, they discussed two courses that are offered as distance education. We received the syllabi for these courses, and the content of the syllabi were reviewed.**

<i>Nature of Online Learning Courses.</i> How do faculty use distance learning options in face to face courses e.g., blended learning, hybrid learning, hybrid flexible (hyflex), flipped classroom, or other instructional strategies that allow student/instructor separation? How extensive is distance learning in the curriculum?	Some online lecture as asynchronous modality as preparation for in-class discussion. Students are instructed to watch pre-recorded lectures with guided note-taking assignments to prepare for discussion.	
<i>Faculty and Student Preparation for Distance Education.</i> What training is offered to faculty who incorporate distance learning in their courses? Can students request a distance learning option for onsite courses? How is their placement in the option determined? What orientation to distance education do students receive?	The distance option is limited to the aforementioned two courses, and students cannot request remote participation in other courses. Faculty training to prepare for distance (hyflex, in their case) was not available at the time of the visit.	

<i>Quality of the Distance Education Infrastructure.</i> Are the learning platform and academic infrastructure of the institution conducive to learning and interaction between faculty and students and among students? Is the technology adequately supported? Are there back-ups?	Distance education portion of the course is limited to watching recorded lecture and occasionally participate in the class discussion via zoom (otherwise in-person). It is unclear what back-up options are made available for students who failed to zoom, however.	
<i>Faculty Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction.</i> How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for “faculty-initiated, regular and substantive interaction”? How is compliance monitored? What activities count as student/instructor substantive interaction”?	Syllabi present weekly schedule with topics and readings covered. Each topic seems to rely on discussion to deepen student learning done in an in-person modality.	
<i>Academic Engagement.</i> How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for “Academic Engagement”? How is compliance monitored? What activities contribute to academic engagement?	Reading, preparation for discussion, in-class participation, paper, and exams are part of the student engagement with the course activity. The learning experiences for these two hybrid courses mirror that of fully in-person courses.	
<i>Student Identification Verification and Privacy.</i> What is the institution’s process for student verification, e.g., a secure login and pass code; proctored examinations; other technologies or practices that are effective in verifying student identification? What precautions are taken by the institution to protect technology from cyber security intrusions on its or outsourced systems? Are additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity disclosed at the time of registration or enrollment?	The LMS and other student management systems and their security features are centralized via the Graduate Theological Union Consortium, and we did not get information about cybersecurity that DSPT manages.	
<i>Quality Assurance.</i> What processes are in place to collect data from courses that use some type of remote learning? How are the findings used to improve instruction?	Assessment is done as part of the program review. Given that only two courses are done in distance education (hybrid).	

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Revised April 2023