

REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM  
For Reaffirmation of Accreditation

**To the American Jewish University  
March 26-28, 2024**

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The team evaluated the institution under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

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## SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

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### A. DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTITUTION AND ITS ACCREDITATION HISTORY, AS RELEVANT

American Jewish University (AJU) was formed through the 2007 union of the University of Judaism and the Brandeis-Bardin Institute. A private not-for-profit institution of higher education located in Los Angeles, CA, AJU has three physical locations that serve the Jewish community: the Sunny and Isadore Familian Campus (Familian) in the Bel Air neighborhood of Los Angeles, a recently acquired and WSCUC-approved location in Beverly Hills, and the Brandeis-Bardin Campus (BBC) in Simi Valley. Among the three locations, the Beverly Hills location serves as AJU's rabbinic program site; the Familian campus serves as its administrative site.

AJU has been accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) since 1972. In 2016, the institution was reaffirmed for accreditation by WSCUC for eight years. An Interim Report was submitted in March 2019 followed by a second Interim Report in March 2021. In the 2021 Interim Report, two areas required further attention at the time of the visit: 1) as additional programs are developed, administrative and faculty leadership plan for timelines and resources needed to implement the programs, and 2) to draw upon faculty ideas, knowledge, and expertise to inform future planning for program development. These areas were addressed in AJU's self-study and in meetings during the visit.

AJU's mission statement, updated and adopted in 2021, speaks to AJUs programs both those academic and community-based:

*American Jewish University advances and elevates the Jewish journey of individuals, organizations, and our community through scholarship, teaching, engaged conversation, and outreach.*

The School for Jewish Education and Leadership (SJEL) was founded in 1986. The SJEL is led by a dean, a director, and an associate director, supported by five lecturers and one full-time faculty member. As of fall 2023, the SJEL programs and enrollment included an in-person Master of Arts in Education (MAEd) (2 students); an online blended Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education (BA ECE) degree completion program (23 students); an online blended Master of Arts in Education Early Childhood Education (MAEd EC) (32 students); and an online blended Doctorate in Education in Early Childhood Education Leadership (EdD) (11 students). The SJEL also offered the following certificate programs: Jewish Education Excellence Project Mentor Teacher Training Certificate (14 students); Early Childhood Education Extension (9 students); and ElevatED program (15 students). Lastly, the Jewish Learning Experience, a program for high school students to take undergraduate-level college credit courses, had 48 students enrolled.

The Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies (ZSRS) was founded in 1996. The ZSRS offers an in-person Master of Arts in Rabbinic Studies (MARS) and ordains rabbis upon completion of the program. As of fall 2023, the MARS program had 26 students enrolled. ZSRS is led by a dean, associate dean, and assistant dean supported by 12 lecturers, five full-time faculty, and one full-time lecturer who also serves as the library director.

Since its last reaffirmation visit in 2016, AJU sunset its undergraduate College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) in 2021 due to declining enrollment. In spring 2023, AJU's School of Enterprise Management and Social Impact paused accepting new students into its Master of Business Administration (MBA) program, also due to low enrollment. AJU is teaching out the two current MBA students until a final determination is made regarding the program.

## **B. DESCRIPTION OF TEAM'S REVIEW PROCESS**

AJU was reviewed under WSCUC's 2013 Standards of Accreditation and related Criteria for Review (CFR). The review process was conducted in two stages: 1) the Offsite Review (OSR) held

November 15-16, 2023, conducted via Zoom with the WSCUC evaluation team and AJU officials; and 2) the Accreditation Visit from March 26-28, 2024.

The team carefully reviewed materials submitted by AJU and past WSCUC team reports and Commission letters. Onsite interviews and discussions provided additional information needed to answer outstanding questions and inform the team's findings. Meetings included AJU individuals and groups who could speak to the relevant WSCUC Standards as they were aligned to the report components. For those unable to participate in a meeting or interview, a confidential email account was made available to all students, staff, and faculty, and was monitored by the assistant chair during the visit.

At the visit's conclusion, the team chair presented five commendations and six recommendations to the president prior to presenting those statements to an assembled group of AJU campus and community members.

### **C. INSTITUTION'S REACCREDITATION REPORT AND UPDATE: QUALITY AND RIGOR OF THE REPORT AND SUPPORTING EVIDENCE**

The team found that the report was well organized around the Standards and included nine components (AJU pursued the optional institution-specific theme component), with five components focused on degree programs, educational quality, student success, quality assurance and improvement, and sustainability. Each of the components embraced self-assessment and reflection on past and current initiatives. AJU addressed previous Commission recommendations.

AJU's accreditation process was led by its chief academic officer who is also the institution's accreditation liaison officer, along with the dean of institutional effectiveness and university registrar, and the coordinator of academic affairs and registrar services. Additional participants in the report preparation and the larger accreditation process included the president, the vice president of finance and administration and chief financial officer, faculty representatives,

the chair of the Committee of Academic Affairs of the Board of Directors, and the chair of the Board of Directors.

In fall 2021, the core accreditation team presented an overview of the process to each of the following groups: deans, senior staff members, the Academic Faculty Senate, and the Board. Additionally, updates were given at the monthly all-staff meetings. The president asked each dean to draft a five-year strategic plan to accompany the accreditation process. These plans allowed for meaningful data collection that informed campus-wide discussions. In spring 2023, a complete report draft was distributed among the campus community for review and comment, feedback was incorporated, and the final draft was circulated in fall 2023 before submitting to WSCUC.

## **SECTION II – EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ESSAYS**

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### **COMPONENT 1: RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS**

The July 2016 Commission action letter included four recommendations for AJU's further development. The 2019 and 2021 Interim Report Committee (IRC) letters included recommendations for areas of continued progress with the 2021 letter noting two recommendations to be addressed during the next institutional report for reaffirmation. The 2021 IRC recommendations are nested under the Commission's first 2016 recommendation with an expanded summary of AJU's response to all four 2016 Commission recommendations.

#### **Commission Action Letter, July 2016**

***Recommendation 1. A comprehensive enrollment management plan based on market assessment data and including recruitment initiatives (that leverage publications, social media and the website) and student retention strategies (CFR 3.4, 4.1, 4.6).***

### **Interim Report Committee letter, July 2021**

*Recommendation 1. As AJU continues its positive momentum and develops additional programming, including any successor to undergraduate program, administrative and faculty leadership should flesh out fully the expected timelines and resources needed to guide the implementing of these programs.*

*Recommendation 2. AJU should continue to draw upon faculty ideas, knowledge, and expertise to inform future assessments and planning to develop programs in particular.*

Since the last reaffirmation visit in 2016, AJU sunset its undergraduate college. Detailed in the 2019 and 2021 Interim Reports, the primary rationale included the downward trend in enrollment and student retention. The institution-wide financial savings were coupled with pausing the business school's enrollment. Financial resources were redistributed to allow for strengthening existing and new programs in the ZSRS and SJEL.

In 2022, the ZSRS dean and associate dean launched a blue-ribbon commission that included students, alumni, faculty, its Advisory Board, and Jewish rabbinic leaders from across the country. Discussions led to clarifying three main initiatives: admissions strategy, tuition costs, and program physical location. The admissions strategy was reinvigorated, and a new admissions and recruitment coordinator moved the process from inquiries to outreach at feeder institutions.

A second initiative focused on the tuition costs for the rabbinic program. With fewer people interested in becoming rabbis, the ZSRS and senior leadership reviewed the current cost structure and agreed to a tuition reset for the next fiscal year. Effective July 2022, the ZSRS's annual tuition decreased from \$31,342.00 to \$7,000 a year. The long-term success of the tuition reset is to be determined; however, feedback from the students during the visit was positive as a reduced barrier to enrolling into the program.

Finally, a third initiative identified that the existing physical location of the ZSRS program in Bel Air presented logistical and financial barriers for current and prospective students (e.g., the commute and distance from Los Angeles proper). A week prior to the visit, AJU had started moving the rabbinic program from the Bel Air Familian campus to a WSCUC-approved additional location in Beverly Hills—a location close to the historic Pico-Roberston Jewish community.

Since the 2016 reaffirmation, the SJEL has struggled with enrollment in its Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT), and its Master of Arts in Education (MAEd). In spring 2021, the SJEL paused MAT and MAEd admission and recruitment efforts and refocused its efforts on growing and sustaining enrollment in its early childhood education (ECE) programs—specifically those supporting educators in the Jewish ECE community. The MAEd ECE was launched in 2018, followed by the degree completion BA ECE in 2019; both were approved for distance education delivery by WSCUC in 2020 and 2021 respectively. Launched in fall 2023, the EdD completed the program discipline’s vertical integration.

#### **Commission Action Letter, July 2016**

***Recommendation 2. Targeted investments in facilities and technology, including classrooms and the institution's web presence. Such investments should enhance AJU's competitive advantage and, therefore, yield solid results in student enrollment and student satisfaction (CFR 2.10, 3.4, 3.5, 4.7).***

AJU invested resources to update and improve its technology capacity in three main areas: website redesign and upgrades, an enhanced classroom experience, and campus technology support.

Website redesign and upgrades. Key areas included a) navigation and webpage architecture, b) design and mobility, c) content and search engine optimization, and d) compliance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Assisted by an outside developer, AJU designed and



developed wireframes and, subsequently, content sections that were shorter, interactive, and cleanly rendered on mobile devices.

Enhanced classroom experience. AJU has added three more technology-enhanced classrooms and upgraded the oldest classrooms with current technology by installing 70-inch touch screens with digital white-board functionality. All the new classrooms at the Beverly Hills location include new classrooms with IT-enhanced teaching and learning capacity.

Campus technology support. AJU partnered with XOverture, an information technology (IT) firm based in Studio City, CA, that has allowed the institution to effectively outsource its IT support. XOverture provides onsite and remote support for all tech-related queries at both the Bel Air and Beverly Hills locations. Additionally, a new network was installed that significantly expanded wireless bandwidth and connectivity; the Microsoft Office 365 software suite was made available to all AJU faculty, staff, and students; Zoom licenses were purchased for the campus community's use; and multi-factor authentication protocols for all AJU e-mail addresses were implemented.

Lastly, in fall 2019, AJU contracted with a cloud-based software company to provide a learning management system (LMS), an SIS, accounting and billing management, financial aid management, as well as admissions and enrollment management. In spring 2020, Blackbaud LMS and SIS were launched, however, limitations became evident. The Blackbaud LMS was replaced by Canvas in fall 2021 and the SIS was replaced by Populi in summer 2022.

***Recommendation 3. Similarly, targeted investments in student services, extra-curricular programs, and co-curricular programs, including residential life, to help increase enrollment in the College of Arts and Sciences and re-establish a positive campus climate for students (CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.13, 3.4, 3.5).***

After considerable effort and resources devoted to increasing enrollment in response to recommendation, by fall 2018 CAS enrollment decreased to 68 students, with almost none living beyond a five-mile radius from campus. AJU sunset the CAS curriculum and ceased accepting new admissions to address the ongoing and unsustainable enrollment decline.

***Recommendation 4. Efforts to provide a safe and secure campus. With the increasing challenges of today's world, visible investments in campus safety and security could restore a sense of safety and well-being among students, faculty, and staff (CFR 3.4, 3.5)***

Utilizing recommendations from the Department of Homeland Security and the Jewish Federation's Community Security Initiative, AJU installed security fencing at its Familian campus along with a related card-swipe system. The fence and access system now requires that either an individual be granted access via a swipe card, or that they check in at the main security gate to confirm an appointment or make an inquiry to visit. AJU also implemented a new communications system that sends through text, voice, and email.

In the event of a crisis, the campus safety and maintenance departments work directly with local and county law enforcement and other first responders, Homeland Security, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to ensure real time reports are received and responded to. With targeted antisemitic threats, AJU communicates with the Anti-Defamation League and the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles.

Overall, the team concluded that the institution has made good progress in addressing the Commission recommendations.

## **COMPONENT 2: COMPLIANCE: REVIEW UNDER WSCUC STANDARDS AND COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS**

### **Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives**

#### **Institutional Purposes**

AJU has demonstrated transparency, seriousness, and integrity in its approach to the review process (CFR 1.8). The team found that the newly revitalized mission statement is guiding the design and redesign of academic programs, administrative and Board of Directors' decision-making in line with the principles that "...advances and elevates the Jewish journey of individuals, organizations, and our community through scholarship, teaching, engaged conversation, and outreach" (CFRs 1.1, 1.5).

AJU is in the initial stages of a comprehensive strategic planning process guided by its mission statement. The team found this plan to be critical to the university's future as it continues to transition geographically and further enhance its graduate program offerings (CFR 1.1). AJU has adopted new institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) and program learning outcomes (PLOs) aligned with student learning outcomes across its academic programs and engages these outcomes in its program review process (CFR 2.7).

The team found that AJU regularly generates, evaluates, and makes public data about student achievement, including measures of retention and graduation and evidence of student learning available. The team also recognizes that the historical institutional data does not reflect the transition to a primarily graduate institution and that AJU is engaged in the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data that accurately reflects this transition. Evidence of student learning was provided during the offsite review process through individual and collaborative student work with faculty (CFR 1.2).

## **Integrity and Transparency**

AJU has a publicly available formally approved mission statement, academic freedom statement, and statement of diversity, equity, and inclusion. In the institutional report, AJU notes that the mission statement, adopted in 2021, and the revitalized statement of diversity, equity, and inclusion demonstrates the institution's "commitment to plurality within and without Judaism" (CFR 1.5). The statements are appropriate for an institution of higher education and define the essential values and character in ways that contribute to the public good (CFR 1.1, 1.3, and 1.4).

AJU maintains a publicly available webpage with data on student achievement, retention, graduation rates, and costs (CFR 1.2, 1.6, and 1.7). Policies on student grievances, complaints, and grade appeals are readily available in the Student Handbook and academic catalog on the institution's website which also includes conduct policies, human subject protocol, and financial aid policies (CFR 1.6 and 1.7). In both the institutional report and responses to lines of inquiry, AJU demonstrated an honest and open communication process with the accrediting commission (CFR 1.8).

Subject to the Commission's review, the team's overall finding is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 1. The Commission has the final determination of compliance with the Standards.

## **Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions**

### **Teaching and Learning**

AJU offers one undergraduate and three graduate level programs, as well as community programs aligned with its mission (the graduate MBA program is in teach out). The content, length, and standards of the academic programs conformed to recognized disciplinary standard (CFR 2.1). While none of the programs are professionally accredited, AJU maintains quality in its degree offerings by hiring qualified faculty, offering rigorous academic curriculum, and maintaining

thorough admission and recruitment processes that are unique to each program (CFRs 2.1, 2.2). For the undergraduate degree program, the BA ECE requires students to enter the program with a minimum of 60.0 semester units transferred in, which includes general education and meeting requirements using the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC).

AJU degree programs have student learning outcomes consistent with required competencies for entry level within the respective disciplines (CFR 2.2). The most recently reported demographics of faculty showed that its programs are taught by qualified faculty and sufficient in number. Across all programs, the learning outcomes were clearly defined, with the faculty collectively taking responsibility for establishing and assessing these student learning outcomes which are listed on course syllabi (CFRs 2.3, 2.4).

AJU's academic PLOs align to the ILOs, and there is a process in place for regular assessment of learning outcomes of all academic programs and student achievement information is posted on the institution's Office of Institutional Effectiveness webpage for the most recent completed academic and prior years (CFRs 2.4, 2.6).

While faculty participated in assessment activities, and a timetable for periodic program review activities was in place, as the ECE programs are less than five years old, only the MARS had undergone a program review at the time of the site visit (CFR 2.4, 2.7). Interactions with the faculty and academic staff during the time of the visit showed AJU is committed to comprehensive assessment and dedicated to continuously improving the student academic experience; however, current resources and infrastructure to support programmatic quality improvement process will need to be emphasized for sustained academic growth (CFRs 2.1, 2.2a, 2.2b).

### **Scholarship and Creative Activity**

AJU full-time faculty engage in teaching, service and, as applicable, research. The Faculty Resources Committee is charged with allocating faculty travel and research funds based on the

policy guidelines in the Faculty Handbook and as established by the university budgetary process; the Roland Fund for Professional Travel and Research is one example that supports full-time faculty members to engage in research, to participate in the various discipline-specific academic organizations, and to represent AJU to the external academic community. Another example is through the sabbatical leave program, also outlined in detail in the Faculty Handbook. During the visit the team was provided with examples of cooperative student and faculty scholarship projects from prior years, and the team met with several long-time published ZRSR faculty who shared copies of their monographs with the team (CFR 2.8).

Considerations for tenure and promotion are based on excellence in teaching, scholarly accomplishments, and service to the university. For teaching, a candidate must have demonstrated excellence in teaching, as confirmed by students, colleagues, and administration. For scholarship, tenure track faculty are expected to engage in the scholarly discourse of their fields. Service expectations include service to the university, the professorate, and the community. The tenure-track process and procedures for the appointment of promotion and tenure are all clearly detailed and available in the Faculty Handbook and the team met with several tenured faculty who have participated in this process successfully (CFR 2.9).

### **Student Learning and Success**

Disaggregated student retention and graduation data was provided to the team and additional student achievement facts are posted on its website. Data include enrollment, degrees awarded, and student demographics by program and degree level. AJU also posts inquiries to applications to admitted to enrolled and eight-year outcomes data by cohort on its website (CFR 2.10).

Students have interned with organizations like the City of Los Angeles, Bet Tzedek Legal Services, and the Casa de la Familia mental health counseling center. Spiritual practice is an

important part of life for many students—both Jewish and non-Jewish. In the ZSRS, a daily minyan, run by students, is a time for everyone to join in moments of personal reflection and communal prayer. Students and faculty also observe Judaic formal and informal Shabbat and holiday programming, shared meals, and discussions (CFR 2.11).

AJU students have ready access to accurate, current, and complete information about admissions, degree requirements, course offerings, and educational costs both in the Student Handbook and on the institution's website. Webpages include multiple helpful admissions and beyond resources related to academics, student services, online/technology, financial aid and billing, registrar, and policies and forms (CFR 2.12).

AJU's strong emphasis on student success was evident in the institution's report and throughout the visit. Examples of initiatives in support of student success included tailored learning outcomes for each program offered, periodic analysis of graduation and retention data, array of student support services, and student close relationship with advisors and mentors. Students interviewed during the site visit described a strong support through mentorship, advising, and quality academic experience. By offering this unique support to students, AJU demonstrated a proactive approach to ensuring the success and progression of its students. Additionally, the incorporation of internship and fieldwork experiences as part of student's assessment practices reflect AJU's adherence to implementing effective evaluation methods that encouraged application of acquired knowledge and skills, preparing them for real-world challenges beyond college (CFR 2.13).

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

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

#### **Faculty and Staff**

AJU's diverse portfolio of programs is supported by 213 full-time and part-time employees; 43 of those employees serve the degree programs within ZSRS and SJEL, 133 employees serve the non-degree programs, and 37 employees are part of supporting services including finance, human resources, registrar, library, advancement, communications, and facilities. For the enrollment levels and program sizes, the supporting services staff are sufficient in number and have the requisite backgrounds and schools to effectively support programmatic activities (CFR 3.1).

Within ZSRS, there are seven full-time faculty members, two adjunct faculty, and four staff in leadership positions. The full-time faculty have extensive experience, with the least-experienced of the tenured faculty having been with AJU for 21 years. To increase the diversity of the faculty, AJU is in the process of hiring a new faculty position that should bring a fresh perspective. The ZSRS faculty conveyed clearly that they believe they are provided ample support from the university to excel in their instructional and research endeavors (CFR 3.2).

Within SJEL, there is one full-time faculty member, 14 adjunct faculty, 10 mentors, and five staff and leadership positions. As a newer program, the SJEL faculty and staff do not have the same depth of history within AJU, but nevertheless they do possess the necessary qualifications and experience to ensure integrity of the academic program. With the high ratio of adjunct faculty, staff training and development activities will be key in ensuring that courses are taught with fidelity and a high degree of quality (CFR 3.3).

#### **Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources**

The university was transparent during the visit about its significant budget challenges. The persistent budget deficits of the last several years present an obstacle to the long-term viability of



the university. The recent closing of the sale of the Familian campus was a critical step towards a more stable financial situation, significantly reducing operating expenses, eliminating debt, and bolstering endowment resources. Budget challenges remain though, and the latest projection is that the post-Familian sale structural budget deficit will be about \$4.5M (CFR 3.4).

The leadership conveyed that there are limited expense reduction opportunities, so the solution to closing the budget deficit lies in revenue enhancements. Revenue growth from increased program enrollment, expanded hospitality services activities, and deepened philanthropic efforts were identified as the avenues to close the budget deficit. These enhancements will strengthen the university's already-diverse revenue streams. The current \$108M endowment provides adequate runway to ensure sufficient resources to maintain university programs in the medium-term. The leadership and Board clearly communicated that they do not want to impair the purchasing power of the endowment more than necessary though, and they expressed a strong commitment to resolving the budget deficit over the next several years (CFR 3.4).

Aside from monetary resources, the university has sufficient physical and information technology resources. The new Beverly Hills location provides geographic and communal benefits for the ZSRS program and is one of several recent investments in the ZSRS program, along with the new assistant dean position and the soon-to-be hired additional faculty position. The new Beverly Hills location will also house 5,000 of the 120,000 books in the university's library collection, with storage for the remaining books to be determined. The Simi Valley property hosts many of the non-degree programs and hospitality services, and it is believed to be the largest Jewish-owned parcel of land outside of Israel at 2,700 acres (CFR 3.5).

## **Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes**

AJU has very strong leadership from its president, chief financial officer (CFO), and Board of Directors. The president has been with AJU for six years and brings significant experience as past president of Colgate University and provost of Miami University of Ohio. The Executive Compensation Committee of the Board is charged with the annual evaluation of the president (CFRs 3.6, 3.8).

The CFO has been with AJU for five years, providing stability through the recent years of organizational transition. The Board of Directors has 26 members who oversee the university's policies and operations. Many of the members have long tenures on the Board, possessing strong institutional knowledge and demonstrating commitment to the organization. The Board is also deeply involved and committed with the philanthropic efforts, which are an important component of ensuring the required resources to operate the university. All the current Board members have contributed toward the regular annual contributions and the capital campaign (CFRs 3.6).

The roles and responsibilities of faculty, staff, administration, the president, and the Board all appear to be clearly understood, respected, and effective. AJU has made strategic hires and created additional roles to better support student experience and success (e.g., dean of institutional effectiveness and university registrar; a coordinator of academic affairs and registrar services; the director of financial aid and enrollment). The institution has revitalized and updated many of its guiding documents and institutional policies to support clear and effective communication lines within AJU's organization (CFR 3.7).

Subject to the Commission's review, the team's overall finding is that the institution has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standard 3. Final determination of compliance with the Standards rests with the Commission.

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

### **Quality Assurance Processes**

The team reviewed evidence that the institution has established systems in place to promote and ensure quality assurance in the academic areas. All academic programs are expected to go through a program review process, which is on a five-year cycle. Annually, each program is required to assess its program learning outcomes and to report these outcomes to the dean of institutional effectiveness. The visit team recognized that some of the data collection and analysis are in transition as the institution makes modality and physical location shifts. Notably, the institution has gone through exercises which ensure that learning outcomes assessment is built into every course, course proposal, and update (CFRs 2.7, 2.10, and 4.1).

AJU collects data on various departments and services spanning student persistence and graduation to campus climate and employee satisfaction. The visit team noted pervasive positivity toward the efforts of administration to be accessible and open to feedback, though it was also noted that the various departments responsible for quality assurance and institutional learning/improvement were understaffed. In addition to the assessment of academic programs, the team found that AJU has an array of student services, and those services should also be evaluated to assess their precision and application to a changing student demographic (CFRs 2.4, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4).

### **Institutional Learning and Improvement**

The visit team observed sufficient evidence of AJU's commitment to student success; however, these processes may exist in some disassociation with centralized analysis (institutional research.) Faculty were clearly passionate about student learning, academic rigor, and advancing assessment approaches. (CFRs 2.2-2.6, and 4.3)

The institution has effectively engaged faculty in student learning assessment, and faculty appear to take ownership of their critical role in fostering student learning and student success. For example, the institution has been committed to incorporating high impact practices into teaching and the curriculum, and it has several noteworthy examples of the use and success of these practices. AJU has also provided important support for faculty efforts in implementing high impact practices. (CFRs 2.6, 2.7, and 4.4).

The institution demonstrated a strong alignment of its academic programs to the Jewish community at large. This was manifested in the geographical move of the graduate program in rabbinic studies from a location removed and remote from the cultural community it serves, to a location situated squarely within proximity to Los Angeles Jewish community. This move to increase access is mirrored by the two-pronged strategy of developing graduate education programs specifically tailored to Jewish early childhood education, and to deliver these programs online (CFRs 2.6, 2.7, and 4.5). AJU is clearly well connected to its constituency group through the panoply of community education and non-credit programming which it offers through online and on-site offerings (CFRs 1.1, 3.4, and 4.6).

The team learned that following the recent sale of the Familian property, the president and board chair will begin co-chairing new strategic planning efforts with the assistance of a consultant. The institution expects the process to take 6-9 months with a focus identity, branding, fiscal sustainability, and programmatic offerings. The Board plans to use the school strategic plans to inform its work. Faculty and staff will be engaged through the shared governance structure for meaningful representation (CFR 4.7).

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

### **COMPONENT 3: DEGREE PROGRAMS: MEANING, QUALITY AND INTEGRITY OF DEGREES**

AJU reflected on the meaning, quality, and integrity of AJU degree programs in its report. All degree programs offered by AJU are rooted in Judaism's rich heritage and a commitment to enriching the Jewish experiences of individuals, organizations, and communities through excellence in scholarship, teaching, and outreach. In alignment with this foundation, deans, faculty, and administrators participated in comprehensive discussions that revitalized the ILOs ensuring the incorporation of these values across all programs. The rich heritage of Judaism is also woven throughout the PLOs, empowering AJU graduates to leverage their education in a manner that embodies Jewish ethics and principles (CFR 2.1).

AJU's primary educational philosophy is the integration of Judaic faith and learning. Its four program offerings were designed with a curriculum that aligns with the university's mission "... advances and elevates the Jewish journey of individuals, organizations and our community through excellence in scholarship, teaching, engaged conversation, and outreach." Students enrolled in the BA ECE degree completion program are accepted with 60 units, 34 of which are from general education, preparing them for advanced learning. Students pursuing master's and doctoral degrees must complete 38 and 55 units, respectively, to graduate. These programs are designed to incorporate Judaic ethics and principles, aligning with the institution's core objectives (CFRs 2.1, 2.2a, 2.2b).

The quality of AJU's degree offerings is characterized by academic depth, institutional learning, and PLOs aimed at fostering social improvement and consistent public and professional engagement of its students and alumni (CFRs 2.11-2.14). Academic programs are staffed by 33 faculty members who are qualified for the type and level of curriculum offered. Faculty are hired in alignment with the university mission and have the qualifications, credentials, teaching experience, and expertise in their discipline (CFRs 2.8 and 3.1). A review of the PLOs confirmed that

AJU's graduate programs have distinct and advanced outcomes compared to the undergraduate offerings. All three graduate programs offered incorporate research elements that culminate in capstone projects and dissertations (CFRs 2.2b and 2.8).

Guided by the Committee of Academic Affairs, AJU maintains the integrity of its academic program through multiple ways. The institutional and program learning outcomes are assessed annually, while academic program reviews are scheduled to take place every five years (CFRs 2.7, 4.1). Mid- and end-of-semester assessments are utilized at the course level to gauge academic progress and student satisfaction (CFR 2.9). To ensure the integrity of its degree programs, AJU regularly evaluates and refines academic policies, procedures, and support mechanisms. Additionally, faculty members are provided with opportunities for professional development and support systems, reinforcing the academic rigor and integrity of the programs (CFRs 3.3, 4.3).

#### **COMPONENT 4: EDUCATIONAL QUALITY: STUDENT LEARNING, CORE COMPETENCIES, AND STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE AT GRADUATION**

AJU uses a multi-tiered strategy for assessing student learning through mapping CLOs to PLOs to ILOs and an established program review process. The ILOs define the knowledge, skills, and values that students acquire in an AJU degree program. As noted, AJU has transitioned to a primarily graduate degree institution and in turn, has fully rewritten the ILOs, PLOs, and CLOs. As AJU moves forward in its transition, the historical data on student learning will no longer reflect the institution and its historical student data. AJU is actively in the process of building out and implementing assessment systems to capture this shift.

AJU currently offers one undergraduate bachelor's degree completion program, the BA ECE. Students admitted to the BA ECE are evaluated as having met core competencies through lower division transfer credits (CFR 2.2a). Evaluation of core competencies is achieved through an evaluation of official transcripts, reviewed by the ECE faculty and University Registrar using the BA

ECE transcript evaluation rubric to ensure that students entering the program have met the core competencies relevant to written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy and critical thinking (CFR 2.2, 2.14). AJU measures student performance against the PLOs, designed further to develop the core competencies (CFR 2.2a).

The BA ECE program has been designed to be a holistic undergraduate degree that fulfills the core competencies and meets the credentialing requirements of California's Early Childhood Teacher Permit Matrix (CFRs 2.4-2.7). AJU offers the graduate MA ECE and MARS programs; both require a bachelor's degree for admission (CFR 2.2b). Each graduate program is staffed with full-time faculty with relevant terminal degrees (CFR 2.2b). The team found that the number of faculty members was more than sufficient to exert collective responsibility for developing and evaluating the curriculum, academic policies, and teaching and mentoring students (CFR 2.2b).

The team found that AJU has an assessment infrastructure to address achievement gaps and "close the loop" using assessment results. In the institution report, AJU provided an example of how the MA ECE used assessment to improve Education 600: Theories of Child Development to address student learning (Appendix 4.01). The dean of institutional effectiveness and ECE faculty identified a barrier to student learning in the final project through the process of assessment. They took appropriate steps to remove that barrier by revising the assignment to provide clear instructions and expectations for students (CFR 2.6). In the offsite review, AJU provided examples of student work from each of the degree programs that demonstrated that competencies and key learning outcomes are being met and evaluated using normed rubrics.

## **COMPONENT 5: STUDENT SUCCESS: STUDENT LEARNING, RETENTION, AND GRADUATION**

At the heart of AJU's approach to student education is the delivery of unique Jewish wisdom and traditions, with a goal of advancing "Jewish journey of individuals, organizations, and communities through outstanding scholarship, teaching, engaged dialogue, and outreach." In

support of student success, AJU established ILOs, which served as benchmarks students must meet across all programs. In addition to community programming, the institution currently offers four academic programs, each with its own set of PLOs, designed to foster student success (CFR 2.1).

The dean of institutional effectiveness and registrar lead the routine assessment and evaluation of student data to enhance student success. Each academic program reviewed the results of their PLOs assessments with the goal of improving student success. Both mid- and end-of-semester course evaluations are administered, and results reflected upon gaining insights into student learning experiences. In addition, discussions on campus climate take place regularly with multiple surveys administered frequently to gather a deeper understanding of student experience. Through these evaluations, AJU identifies the strengths and areas of improvement in its programs and student experiences, leading to well-defined strategies for fostering student success (CFRs 2.10-2.13 and 4.3).

AJU demonstrates strong retention and graduation rates in all its academic programs. Specifically, within the SJEL, the retention rates for the BA ECE and MA ECE vary between 84-100%, with an average graduation rate of 90%. These impressive outcomes are attributed to the small size of the program, flexible learning options, and the structured curriculum design. Moreover, the cohort-based structure of the programs enhanced socio-pedagogical learning, likely contributing significantly to the high retention (CFRs 1.2, 2.10).

AJU faculty are equipped with the necessary training and resources to assist students effectively (CFR 3.1). The institution prioritized student success by implementing a variety of innovative initiatives and support services to bolster student retention and graduation rates (CFRs 1.2, 2.7, 2.13). AJU's programs, known for their applied focus, feature an admission process designed to select candidates who have completed their undergraduate studies and are well-



prepared for the rigors of continued higher education. Utilizing a decentralized admission system, each school within AJU applies comprehensive recruitment strategies to identify and enroll students likely to graduate in a timely manner. To further support student success, AJU cultivates strong advisor-student relationships and provides success coaches and mentors (CFR 2.13, 3.1). These personalized supports are complemented by opportunities for engaging in impactful learning practices, such as fieldwork, academic advising, internships, and research projects.

Both the self-study report and the visit findings emphasized a strong focus on student success and the anticipated growth in enrollment across all academic programs over the next three years. However, the team expects that to maximize the advantages of the projected enrollment increase and maintain high retention and graduation rates, AJU will need to increase funding and assessment of student support and services. Additionally, investing in innovative and best practices for supporting distance education students will be essential for AJU to achieve its mission.

Continuous assessments of learning outcomes and periodic program reviews are among the processes in place at AJU to inform decisions that enhance programmatic and instructional quality, and ultimately supporting student success (CFR 2.7, 2.10, 4.1). Each academic program and associated faculty collaborate with the dean of institutional effectiveness to assess and review the results of the learning outcome assessment. Examples of how the results from assessment are used for improvement were provided.

Additionally, AJU has appointed roles such as an ombudsperson, a Title IX coordinator, and an America with Disabilities Act Section 504 coordinator, ensuring comprehensive support for all students. The institution has also invested in infrastructure improvements to facilitate student success. The ZSRS was recently relocated to an enhanced building in Beverly Hills for easy accessibility to students. With the sale of the Familian campus, a portion of the Sperber

Community Library and the Ostrow Academic Library resources are moving to the new ZSRS location. The remaining library materials will be housed at the Brandeis-Bardin Campus where students and faculty will continue to have access to books, journals, articles, and nationally recognized collections (CFR 3.1).

AJU's strong retention and graduation rates reflect its ability to attract, retain and graduate students dedicated to Jewish education (CFR 2.7). During the visit meetings, the team observed a strong request from students for curriculum flexibility to cater to diverse learning styles, along with the enhancement of student support services, e.g., disabilities and distance learning supports. These suggestions underline the importance of recognizing and addressing the unique needs and challenges of some AJU students who may have varying expectations and experiences.

Although AJU students benefit from close and personal interactions with faculty, advisors, and deans, there was some ambiguity regarding communication with students, e.g., the lack of clear understanding of the WSCUC reaffirmation process. To foster deeper student involvement at AJU, academic leaders are encouraged to consider implementing a more structured approach to integrate students into university processes, especially those affecting their success and learning experiences.

Overall, AJU's dedication to its academic programs, alongside its commitment to data collection, analysis, and evaluation, highlights its ongoing focus on student success. Despite the emerging stage of its data quality and systems, AJU's application of suitable assessment methodologies has enabled it to make informed decisions and continually enhance the educational experiences of its students (CFRs 2.10, 2.11, 2.14, 4.1, and 4.2.).

## **COMPONENT 6: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND IMPROVEMENT: PROGRAM REVIEW, ASSESSMENT, USE OF DATA AND EVIDENCE**

AJU's report highlighted that quality assurance plays a critical role in evaluating learning outcomes and reviewing programs, emphasizing the importance of data and evidence in the university's operations. Assessment at AJU is guided by the university mission and ILOs. The formulation of the ILOs was a collaborative endeavor, engaging the Academic Faculty Senate, the dean's council, senior academic leaders, and the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board, all dedicated to ensuring the excellence of the ILOs. An ILO review committee supports the dean of institutional effectiveness in the periodic assessment of the ILOs; however, at the time of the visit the ILO committee had not assessed or reported on the effectiveness of the ILOs (CFRs 2.4, 4.3-4.6).

AJU operates a decentralized process for the assessment of program and student learning outcomes. At each program level, assessment of learning outcomes is conducted annually. With support from the dean of institutional effectiveness, each program identifies one or two PLOs and associated course learning outcomes to be assessed. Artifacts from associated courses are assessed using methodology designed at the program level, cumulating into an assessment report that is discussed at the school steering committee meetings and the Academic Faculty Senate prior to submission to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (CFR 2.4, 2.6, 4.6).

Based on the self-study report and findings during the visit, it appears the use of assessment data for quality improvement is sporadic and emerging across the academic programs. For example, while ZSRS has a comprehensive assessment of the PLOs resulting in the streamlining of courses in the MARS curriculum, there was less evidence from other programs to demonstrate that assessment results are used to inform curriculum improvement. It was noted that multiple surveys were deployed across programs to gather data for continuous improvement,

including the mid- and end-of-semester surveys; however, the self-study report and subsequent onsite interviews did not show how the data collected were systematically used to inform decision making across all programs.

Benchmark data for comparison or assessment data trends to gauge student's performance over time was absent. It was apparent to the team that the culture of assessment at AJU is emerging; therefore, academic programs and staff will benefit from assessment related professional development for quality assurance to be sustained in its assessment activities. In addition, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness may consider creating well-defined expectations that all programs follow to ensure consistency with how assessment activities are conducted.

AJU has a formal program review process that ensures quality assurance and continuous improvement for all academic programs (CFR 2.7, 4.1). Program review occurs on a five-year continuous cycle with each program conducting PLOs assessment, administering surveys, and reviewing relevant academic data on a scheduled timetable. To support the program review process, there is a Program Review Committee (PRC) that includes deans, faculty, and program directors. The PRC is responsible for analyzing all program review materials and drafting a final report summarizing the program review findings. As is best practice, AJU engages external reviewers who provide objective feedback on the quality of its degree programs, as demonstrated in the recently concluded review of the MARS program that streamlined the curriculum to meet the needs of professional positions an ordained rabbi (CFR 4.1, 4.2).

Meetings during the visit with deans and faculty involved in the program review process indicated a strong collaboration with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, and also expressed the need for additional support and focused professional development to enhance the quality of the review process (CFRs 2.7 and 4.3). Relatedly, the team observed that supporting resources or clearly documented specifications that may be followed in a typical program review process

needed improvements. AJU may consider developing a simpler program review template to enhance participation in the program review process.

AJU data management is coordinated through activities taking place in the Offices of Institutional Effectiveness, Registrar, Academic Affairs, and Finance and Administration. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness is the custodian of all university data. However, due to the small size of the institution, each office maintains a database where information relevant to the unit activities are housed. From interviews conducted on campus, there were indications that AJU is prioritizing improved data infrastructure to support data use, quality assurance, and decision making. For example, the change in the Student Information System (SIS) from Champs to Blackbaud, and most recently to Populi ensured that student information is easily accessible and analyzed to improve the quality of decisions made on student journey. In addition, AJU sought the support of a consultancy firm in analyzing its data to resolve the questions on the future of its undergraduate programs (CFR 2.10, 4.1).

As AJU went through the process of redefining its future directions, there was active engagement of the campus community in the process. For example, there was an intentional review of prior planning documents that resulted in the current strategic planning direction for AJU. In addition, each of the schools recently leveraged its historical data on enrollment, revenues, costs, and attrition to create a five-year strategic plan which prioritized the strategic future of programs offered—a process that also led to the EdD offering in the SJEL (CFR 2.10, 4.2). At the time of the site visit, the university was in the process of setting up a strategic planning committee that develop a university strategic plan that reflects the innovation, growth, and commitment to a Judaic education.

The team observed that university leadership recognizes the importance of data and evidence in quality assurance and improvement. During the site visit, however, there seemed to be

inadequate staffing resources in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to drive the use of data and evidence for continuous quality assurance and improvement (CRF 2.1). At the time of the visit, the office had in place one full-time equivalent staff supporting institutional research, assessment, accreditation, registrar's functions, among other responsibilities.

Based on interviews conducted during the visit, while the Office of Institutional Effectiveness was praised for being responsive to the needs of the campus community, the current capacity of the office is not sustainable for the new direction of the university. Concerns were raised that because of the institution's changing mission, existing institutional data will not reflect the future direction of AJU. Therefore, those data have minimal impact on current decisions. The team recommended that AJU build capacity in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to foster data analysis and dissemination of quality data that support decision making processes (CFR 3.7, 4.2).

## **COMPONENT 7: SUSTAINABILITY: FINANCIAL VIABILITY, PREPARING FOR THE CHANGING HIGHER EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT**

The university has undergone significant changes and faced financial challenges in recent years. AJU has had deficits between \$5M to \$8M each year from 2019-20 through 2023-24. While the structural budget deficit presents obvious challenges, the university does draw strength from its diverse revenue sources. AJU derives funding from the following sources: degree program tuition (3%), non-degree program tuition (1%), community programs (42%), endowment spending (29%), and annual fundraising (25%).

In the short and medium terms, the university will be able to absorb the budget deficits; however, this is not sustainable in the long-term. The long-term financial sustainability of the university hinges on five primary efforts: 1) the sale of the Familian campus; 2) increased fundraising; 3) endowment investment; 4) enrollment growth within the degree and community

programs; and 5) increased revenues from hospitality operations. The university has made significant recent changes to their programs and also successfully completed the sale of its Familian campus, which is a critical step towards improving the financial picture. The sale will reduce the annual operating deficit from ~\$8M to ~\$4.5M. This is an important step, but there remains more work to be done to resolve the long-term financial sustainability challenges (CFR 3.4).

The university is in the middle of an ambitious comprehensive campaign to raise \$50M with \$25M dedicated to upgrades of the Camp Alonim facilities at the BBC site in Simi Valley. The other \$25M is dedicated to the Capital Campaign, which will support ongoing operating expenses. As of March 2024, the university had raised about \$21.5M of the overall \$50M campaign. The Board has been extensively involved in the fundraising efforts and is committed to working with an experienced advancement team to achieve the fundraising goals (CFR 3.4, 3.6, 3.7).

The endowment also supports the ongoing operating expenses. Following the sale of the Familian campus, the endowment resources are around \$108M. The spending rate of 5% results in an endowment draw of about \$5M each year to support the operating budget, which is already assumed in the post-Familian-sale projected budget deficit of \$4.5M. Additional endowment draws beyond the standard \$5M per year will be necessary until the budget deficit is closed. The current size of the endowment provides some runway for the university to absorb the additional endowment draws, but those additional draws will reduce the purchasing power of the endowment. Closing the structural budget deficit in the next few years will be important to preserve the vitality of the endowment (CFR 3.4).

For the degree programs, AJU's budget projections reflect only modest enrollment increases over the next three years, with most of the growth driven by filling out the newly established doctorate program. The enrollment growth and resulting tuition growth will only

increase the portion of revenues coming from the degree programs to 5% in 2026-27, from the current 3%. The enrollment growth is not expected to materially impact the financial picture for the degree programs, which are projected to continue to have substantially negative contribution margins. Unlike the budget projections, the SJEL team is expecting stronger enrollment growth. The team suggests that the university ensure enrollment projections are synced up across the finance and program teams (CFRs 2.2, 3.5).

The community programs and non-credit-bearing programs are generally profitable and help offset the losses from the degree programs. The bulk of the revenue and positive contribution margin for the community programs comes from Camp Alonim and the hospitality services segments. The revenue increases are projected to be moderate, with the ~40% share in overall organization revenue expected to stay at its current level over the next three years (i.e., ~\$7M in revenue out of approved ~\$17M overall budget).

The landscape of higher education is continually evolving, and time is of the essence to ensure the survivability of the university. The president and Board of Directors are to be commended for recognizing this issue and making significant and decisive moves to attempt to address the challenges to financial sustainability (CFRs 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 4.4, 4.7).

## **COMPONENT 8: OPTIONAL ESSAY ON INSTITUTION-SPECIFIC THEMES**

AJU has developed a community programming offering to further its mission statement. In the transition to a primarily graduate institution, community programming has served a dual purpose: as an alumni and intergenerational network to support development efforts and possibly as an introduction for high school and undergraduate students who may consider the institution for future graduate degree studies. However, the latter has not been fully developed at this time. Community programming has and is engaged in expanding credit-bearing course offerings. As the credit-bearing course offerings develop further, professional development in assessment should



be offered to ensure that student learning is measured, and the quality and integrity of the courses are maintained.

The broad range of community programs expands the ways in which the institution can further its mission and have an impact. The community programs also help bolster the organization's financial situation by diversifying the revenue streams and providing positive financial contributions that offset some of the deficits in the degree programs. Less directly, the community programs also provide cross-marketing opportunities that could lead to student enrollment in the degree programs. The AJU team mentioned efforts to implement new CRM systems to better understand how participants are interacting within and across the various community programs and degree programs. While the strength of the community programs is largely positive for the institution, it is important to ensure that the community programs do not divert the necessary focus and resources from the degree programs.

In as much as AJU has developed a wide range of cultural and community programming designed to support their mission and cultural constituency, the team also noted that the reduction of academic offerings (albeit in the name of focusing on service to the Jewish community) represented a potential threat to the academic core of the institution. Without commenting on the presence, quality, and appropriateness of the community programming, the team was none the less concerned that AJU does not lose the centrality of its academic programs. It was further noted that, while data processes, assessment structures, and student services were evident in the culture of the institution, staffing, roles, and responsibilities were spread thin, especially considering the need to serve the non-credit side of the institution as well as the credit bearing programs.

## **COMPONENT 9: REFLECTION AND PLANS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The AJU self-study report and accreditation visit revealed an institution steeped in commitment to its historical mission and cultural constituency. At the same time, the team observed an organization in significant transition. With the recent sale of its legacy physical property, AJU addressed and resolved significant financial debt, while at the same time relocating their core, in-person graduate program (Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies) to a new location in the heart of the Jewish community in Los Angeles (this decision being made with an eye to increasing access for ZSRS students.) Further, AJU took the courageous step to sunset its staple undergraduate program, which was facing a sustained, anemic enrollment and represented a financial drain on the institution. AJU has also taken considerable steps toward developing graduate programs specifically designed to serve their core constituency. Through a suite of programs specifically oriented toward early childhood Jewish education, delivered entirely through distance education, AJU is seeking to maximize their relevancy to their constituency while developing a viable enrollment model for the future. This, coupled with the strong array of non-credit offerings, ranging from Hebrew language to cultural literacy, to youth camping experiences, AJU has established itself as a strong voice of education in the Jewish community locally and regionally.

### **SECTION III – OTHER TOPICS, AS APPROPRIATE**

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No other topics.

### **SECTION IV – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TEAM REVIEW**

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The team found that AJU completed a comprehensive review as it prepared for reaffirmation of accreditation. The self-study report, supplemental documents, and evidence gathered during the accreditation visit demonstrated the self-study process was an important institutional priority intended to impact its future growth and success. The self-study report summarized and presented AJU’s findings, interpretations, and conclusions in a way that was both thorough and transparent. Commendations in presidential leadership, institutional unity, board engagement, fundraising, and mission alignment were noted by the team; and the team offered recommendations aimed at strengthening and refining processes, especially during a time of tectonic change.

The team has five commendations and six recommendations for the institution.

#### **Commendations**

The team commends AJU in the following areas:

1. President and senior leadership for shepherding the institution through critical transition periods.
2. Academic deans, faculty, and staff for reimagining academic programs to reduce barriers related to access, cost, and time to degree.

3. Institutional and Program Learning Outcomes that are rooted in Judaic principles regarding intellect, service, social justice, and advocacy.
4. Robust advancement team, systems, and processes that effectively cultivate donor and philanthropic efforts.
5. Board of Directors for its commitment to and engagement with the mission and future direction of the institution.

### **Recommendations**

The team recommends that AJU:

1. Develop and strengthen its strategic planning process engaging all of its constituents (e.g., faculty, staff, students). (CFR 4.6)
2. Build capacity in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to provide data integrity and analysis to support the institution's strategic decision-making processes. (CFR 4.2)
3. Improve its distance education capacity, aligned with best practices, to ensure the delivery of a high-quality educational experience, and expand its professional development opportunities for faculty. (CFRs 2.1, 3.5)
4. Formalize and institutionalize its continuous improvement processes (e.g., assessment, program review) and provide best practices and professional development opportunities to its faculty and academic staff. (CFRs 2.7, 4.4)
5. Examine the distribution of its support services (e.g., advising, disability accommodation, counseling) to better meet students where they are. (CFR 2.13)
6. Resolve its structural budget deficit to ensure long-term financial sustainability. (CFR 3.4)

## **APPENDICES**

### Federal Compliance Forms

Credit Hour and Program Length Review

Marketing and Recruitment Review

Student Complaints Review

Transfer Credit Review

### Distance Education Review

# Federal Compliance Forms

## Overview

There are four forms that WSCUC uses to address institutional compliance with some of the federal regulations affecting institutions and accrediting agencies:

1. Credit Hour and Program Length Review Form
2. Marketing and Recruitment Review Form
3. Student Complaints Form
4. Transfer Credit Policy Form

During the visit, teams complete these four forms and add them as an appendix to the Team Report. Teams are not required to include a narrative about any of these matters in the team report but may include recommendations, as appropriate, in the Findings, Commendations, and Recommendations section of the team report.

## Credit Hour and Program Length Review Form

Under federal regulations, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's credit hour policy and processes as well as the lengths of its programs.

### Credit Hour - §602.24(f)

The accrediting agency, as part of its review of an institution for renewal of accreditation, must conduct an effective review and evaluation of the reliability and accuracy of the institution's assignment of credit hours.

1. The accrediting agency meets this requirement if-
  - i. It reviews the institution's-
    - A. Policies and procedures for determining the credit hours, as defined in 34 CFR 600.2, that the institution awards for courses and programs; and
    - B. The application of the institution's policies and procedures to its programs and coursework; and
  - ii. Makes a reasonable determination of whether the institution's assignment of credit hours conforms to commonly accepted practice in higher education.
2. In reviewing and evaluating an institution's policies and procedures for determining credit hour assignments, an accrediting agency may use sampling or other methods in the evaluation.

**Credit hour** is defined by the Department of Education as follows:

A credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than—

1. One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or

2. At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission’s Credit Hour Policy.

**Program Length - §602.16(a)(1)(viii)**

Program length may be seen as one of several measures of quality and as a proxy measure for scope of the objectives of degrees or credentials offered. Traditionally offered degree programs are generally approximately 120 semester credit hours for a bachelor’s degree, and 30 semester credit hours for a master’s degree; there is greater variation at the doctoral level depending on the type of program. For programs offered in non-traditional formats, for which program length is not a relevant and/or reliable quality measure, reviewers should ensure that available information clearly defines desired program outcomes and graduation requirements, that institutions are ensuring that program outcomes are achieved, and that there is a reasonable correlation between the scope of these outcomes and requirements and those typically found in traditionally offered degrees or programs tied to program length.

**1. Credit Hour and Program Length Review Form**

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate.)
Policy on credit hour	Is this policy easily accessible? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, where is the policy located? <a href="#">2023-2024 Master Catalog</a> , p.122 and the <a href="#">Credit hour policy on website</a>
	Comments:
Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour	Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: AJU’s chief academic officer, dean of institutional effectiveness, and school deans routinely audit courses against our credit hour policy, during course approval, program reviews, and annual assessments.
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:
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? Five
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? Online and hybrid
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Early Childhood Education
	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
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)	Comments:
	How many syllabi were reviewed? Two
	What kinds of courses? Early Childhood Education and Rabbinic Studies
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
What discipline(s)? Early Childhood Education	

<i>Please review at least 1 - 2 from each degree level.</i>	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: Practicum and Seminar
Sample program information (catalog, website, or other program materials)	How many programs were reviewed? Two
	What kinds of programs were reviewed? Early Childhood Education and Rabbinic Studies
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Early Childhood Education and Rabbinic Studies
	Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:

Review Completed By: Susan M. Clapper

Date: 29 March 2024



## 2. Marketing and Recruitment Review Form

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

Material Reviewed	Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.
**Federal regulations	Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: <a href="#">Academic Catalog statement</a>
Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: Degree completion <a href="#">Academic Catalog</a> Cost <a href="#">Tuition and fees page</a>
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments: Career opportunities included in program descriptions, alumni stories highlighted, and a job board for ECE/K-12 positions in the community.

\*§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: Susan M. Clapper

Date: 29 March 2024

### 3. Student Complaints Review Form

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

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Policy on student complaints	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Is so, where? <a href="#">Student Grievances and Complaints page</a>
	Comments:
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: Steps include completing an online form or downloading and emailing to the Office of Student Affairs. Student information and the complaint is kept confidential. Any questions a student may have that have not been satisfactorily answered by the institution may be directed to the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education. The University's EEO and Title IX officer handles non-academic complaints.
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Records	Comments: <a href="#">2023 Student Handbook</a>
	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where? Historical student grievances/complaints are retained on a secure drive. More recent complaints are monitored and stored via a secure Microsoft Form. Confidentiality is maintained in alignment with FERPA policy.
	Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, please describe briefly: Student records are maintained in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974
	Comments:

\*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)

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

Review Completed By: Susan M. Clapper

Date: 29 March 2024

## 4. Transfer Credit Policy Review Form

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

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Transfer Credit Policy(s)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, is the policy publicly available? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where? <a href="#">Master Catalog</a> and <a href="#">BAECE Transfer</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? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:

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

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

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

Review Completed By: Susan M. Clapper

Date: 29 March 2024

# Distance Education Review-Team Report Appendix

Institutions must have WSCUC approval to utilize distance education in the delivery of any of its programs in any amount and are required to seek WSCUC approval for programs where 50% or more of the program can be completed through distance education. The institution's use of distance education in the delivery of its programs is reviewed as part of a comprehensive evaluation of the institution including an Accreditation Visit or Seeking Accreditation Visit.

**Distance Education** is defined as:

Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed below to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor or instructors and to support **regular and substantive interaction** between the students and the instructor or instructors, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies that may be used to offer distance education include:

- The internet;
- One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband, fiber optic, satellite, or wireless communication devices;
- Audioconference;
- Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in this definition

In keeping with federal expectations, WSCUC requires institutions that utilize distance education in the delivery of programs to demonstrate "Faculty-Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction" and "Academic Engagement" as defined by the federal regulations (see Code of Federal Regulations §600.2).

**Regular and Substantive Interaction** is engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following:

- (i) Providing direct instruction;
- (ii) Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
- (iii) Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
- (iv) Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
- (v) Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

An institution ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency -

- (i) Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and
- (ii) Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

**Academic Engagement** requires active participation by a student in an instructional activity related to the student's course of study that –

(1) Is defined by the institution in accordance with any applicable requirements of its State or accrediting agency;

(2) Includes, but is not limited to -

(i) Attending a synchronous class, lecture, recitation, or field or laboratory activity, physically or online, where there is an opportunity for interaction between the instructor and students;

(ii) Submitting an academic assignment;

(iii) Taking an assessment or an exam;

(iv) Participating in an interactive tutorial, webinar, or other interactive computer-assisted instruction;

(v) Participating in a study group, group project, or an online discussion that is assigned by the institution; or

(vi) Interacting with an instructor about academic matters

Please complete either Section A for institutions that offer distance education programs approved by WSCUC or are 100% distance education institutions OR Section B for institutions that utilize distance education in the delivery of programs that do not rise to the level of a WSCUC approved distance education program.

**Institution:** American Jewish University (AJU)

**Type of Visit:** Reaffirmation of Accreditation

**Name of reviewer/s:** Susan M. Clapper

**Date/s of review:** March 26-28, 2024

**Section Completed:** X A OR \_\_B

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

**SECTION A:** Institutions with Approved Distance Education Programs

1. Programs and courses reviewed (please list)

- Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education (degree completion)

Course reviewed:

EDU 304 Collaborations and Adaptations for Special Needs in Early Childhood Education

EDU 310 Field Experience-Lesson Plans for Young Children

EDU 315 Child Guidance and Positive Discipline

- Master of Arts in Education in Early Childhood Education

Course reviewed:

EDU 660 Research Methods

EDU 670 Professional Development, Supervision, and Leadership in Early Childhood Education

EDU 685 Equity, Diversity, and Social Policy in Early Childhood Education

- Doctorate in Education in Early Childhood Education Leadership

Course reviewed:

EDU 701 Current Trends in Early Childhood Research

EDU 703 Philosophy of Education

*NB:* The online MBA program is being taught out with two students.

2. Background Information (number of programs offered by distance education; degree levels; FTE enrollment in distance education courses/programs; history of offering distance education; percentage growth in distance education offerings and enrollment; platform, formats, and/or delivery method)

AJU offers three (3) degree programs (listed above) and four (4) certificate programs (listed below).

- Advanced Certificate in Early Childhood Education Pedagogy and Curriculum
- Advanced Certificate in Special Needs in Early Childhood Education
- Basic Certificate in Early Childhood Education
- Jewish Learning Experience Certificate

FTE Enrollment for 2023-24 includes:

- BA in Early Childhood Education: 23.0
- MA in Education in Early Childhood Education: 32.0
- EdD in Early Childhood Education Leadership: 11.0
- Advanced Certificate in Early Childhood Education Pedagogy and Curriculum: 0.0
- Advanced Certificate in Special Needs in Early Childhood Education: 0.0
- Basic Certificate in Early Childhood Education: 4.3
- Jewish Learning Experience Certificate: 13.0

AJU’s initial distance education program began in 2019-20, the BA in Early Childhood Education. This was followed by the MA (2020-21) and the EdD (2023-24) – both in Early Childhood Education.

History of offering distance education. Enrollment in the degree programs by year is below:

*5-year Enrollment in AJU Distance Education Degree Programs*

AY	BA in ECE	MA in ECE	EdD in ECE
2019-20	11		
2020-21	7	13	
2021-22	10	19	
2022-23	10	8	
2023-24	11	24	11

AJU students must have a device that allows for access to its Learning Management System (LMS) and corresponding materials. Courses are offered in a blended learning format; students learn weekly at synchronously scheduled class sessions via Zoom, and asynchronously weekly via AJU’s LMS, Canvas by Instructure.

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

The review of DE modality at the institution was informed by the self-study, the learning platform (Canvas), sample online course syllabi (eight total) provided by the chief academic officer, and onsite interviews with the dean of institutional effectiveness and university registrar, deans, program directors, faculty, and students.

## Observations and Findings

Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	Follow-up Required (identify the issues)
<p><i>Fit with Mission.</i> How does the institution conceive of distance learning relative to its mission, operations, and administrative structure? How are distance education offerings planned, funded, and operationalized?</p>	<p>AJU “advances and elevates the Jewish journey of individuals, organizations and our community through excellence in scholarship, teaching, engaged conversation, and outreach” as its mission. The distance education programs provide pathways to fulfill its mission by reaching students it may not otherwise be able to reach locally. Faculty are centrally involved in the curriculum development and each program has an academic advisor and mentors are also available. to support students. Programs are funded through the university budget, with the goal of the programs being self-support if not a revenue stream in the future.</p>	
<p><i>Connection to the Institution.</i> How are distance education students integrated into the life and culture of the institution?</p>	<p>All AJU students are provided with an LMS that includes information and support resources with a specific module-section for distance education to build community.</p> <p>The Office of Academic Affairs regular emails and meets with distance education to be sure they have information on available resources. Students also participate in Campus Climate surveys, mid-semester check-ins, support services assessment, and course evaluations.</p> <p>Students in the distance education programs have also been invited to online synchronous non-academic programming, such as a recent “Mental Health Strategies to Prevent Burnout” presentation and a presentation on microaggressions, which both occurred on Zoom and in the evening to accommodate the working professionals in online programming.</p>	
<p><i>Quality of the DE Infrastructure.</i> Are the learning platform and academic infrastructure of the institution conducive to learning and interaction between faculty and students and among students? Is the technology adequately supported? Are there back-ups?</p>	<p>AJU’s distance learning programming is housed on the Canvas by Instructure LMS, which is managed centrally by XOverture, AJU’s Information Technology vendor. AJU’s director of the ECE programs and dean of institutional effectiveness both support faculty for instructional design support and training of faculty. XOverture is available to support and troubleshoot with students and faculty 24/7. AJU’s technologies infrastructure including its Canvas LMS can store, restore, and back-up data due to Canvas’s cloud-based software.</p>	



<p><i>Student Support Services:</i> What is the institution's capacity for providing advising, counseling, library, computing services, academic support and other services appropriate to distance modality? What do data show about the effectiveness of the services?</p>	<p>Students are provided with an academic advisor and access to counseling psychological services (by appointment). Students are also provided with an orientation that walks them through navigating the systems and their program, as well as information on support services. Through AJU's Canvas and AJU Students webpage, (<a href="https://www.aju.edu/current-students">https://www.aju.edu/current-students</a>), students are provided with access to information and resources about financial aid, FAFSA, application deadlines, registration, and student account and billing. Students also have access to the Ostrow Academic Library and its databases. Students access the library via the website at <a href="https://www.aju.edu/ostrow-academic-library">https://www.aju.edu/ostrow-academic-library</a>.</p>	
<p><i>Faculty.</i> Who teaches the courses, e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct? Do they teach only online courses? In what ways does the institution ensure that distance learning faculty are oriented, supported, and integrated appropriately into the academic life of the institution? How are faculty involved in curriculum development and assessment of student learning? How are faculty trained and supported to teach in this modality?</p>	<p>AJU employs full- and part-time faculty with the majority teaching online in the distance education programs. The director and assistant director of ECE programs are responsible for the onboarding and orientation of online faculty in the ECE programs. During the newly hired faculty members' first semester teaching, the ECE directors observe faculty for qualitative feedback. Faculty participate in curricular development and assessment of the courses they teach. Faculty are provided an AJU resources course in Canvas, which provides training materials, best practices, and guidelines on how to teach in the distance education modality.</p>	
<p><i>Curriculum and Delivery.</i> Who designs the distance education programs and courses? How are they approved and evaluated? Are the programs and courses comparable in content, outcomes and quality to on-ground offerings? (Submit credit hour report.)</p>	<p>The ECE distance education programs and courses were initially designed by the dean and ECE directors, in consultation with faculty and subject-matter-experts (who also teach the courses) to design the courses in the Canvas system. After each semester ends, the ECE directors review course evaluations to review student feedback on course design and ECE directors meet with faculty to discuss pedagogy and curricular revisions, where needed. The programs are courses that are comparable in content, outcomes, and quality to on-ground offerings.</p>	

<p><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”?</p>	<p>During the synchronous weeks of learning, students engage with faculty around that week’s discussion topic. Faculty members lead group discussions and students can ask questions and provide input. Instructors keep track of weekly attendance and ask students to keep their cameras turned on during class. Asynchronous components of the class also facilitate both student engagement and faculty interaction. Instructors post video lectures with corresponding discussion boards and assignments to assess learning and ensure students watch videos and complete reading assignments. All discussions are instructor-initiated on the LMS platform.</p>	
<p><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?</p>	<p>AJU monitors academic engagement of distance education students through the Canvas LMS platform and participation during synchronous learning. Students are given a maximum of 5 points for participation and attendance during synchronous learning and students are graded on weekly asynchronous participation in the LMS platform. Leading up to census, AJU will reach out to students who have not logged into the platform or attended synchronous learning. Students who are non-responsive to outreach attempts will automatically be dropped by the census deadline.</p>	
<p><i>State Licensure Requirements.</i> Describe, as appropriate, the institution’s process for disclosing to students how state licensure requirements are met by distance education programs, whether licensure requirements are not met by programs, or whether the institution has not determined where licensure requirements are met by the programs.</p>	<p>AJU provides disclosures as part of the enrollment process that the distance education programs do not lead to any state credentials or licensures. This disclosure is included as part of the Application for Admission into the programs.</p>	<p>If the programs seek CCTC approval for the newly approved PK-3 ECE Specialist Instruction Credential and adopts a curriculum that is aligned with the CCTC, it will need to ensure that its out-of-state students understand that the curriculum meets California licensing requirements and not necessarily the student’s home state.</p>

<p><i>Student Identification Verification and Privacy.</i> What is the institution’s process for student verification, e.g., a secure login and pass code; proctored examinations; other technologies or practices that are effective in verifying student identification? What precautions are taken by the institution to protect technology from cyber security intrusions on its or outsourced systems? Are additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity disclosed at the time of registration or enrollment?</p>	<p>All students at AJU are required to provide an official photo ID in their application for admissions, which is utilized to also verify transcript records to verify student identity. AJU’s IT vendor, XOverture provides students with a secure AJU email address and temporary password for initial login to their Microsoft Outlook accounts during the onboarding process. The onboarding also includes instructions on Microsoft’s multi-factor authentication, how login to the LMS platform, Zoom for synchronous learning, and the student information system for records; of which all use single-sign-on access. AJU also provides students with their technology policies including email phishing and digital security policies and recommendations.  <a href="https://www.aju.edu/current-students/technology-policies">https://www.aju.edu/current-students/technology-policies</a> and <a href="https://www.aju.edu/technology-shortcuts">https://www.aju.edu/technology-shortcuts</a>).</p>	
<p><i>Retention and Graduation.</i> What data on retention and graduation are collected on students taking online courses and programs? What do these data show? What disparities are evident? Are rates comparable to on-ground programs and to other institutions’ online offerings? If any concerns exist, how are these being addressed?</p>	<p>AJU’s dean of institutional effectiveness provides academic leadership, including those overseeing distance education programs data on graduation and retention. The data shows that retention of the distance education degree programs is higher at an average of 94% for the MA and 98% for the BA in ECE programs (the EdD program launched in fall of 2023 and therefore retention is 100% from fall 2023 to spring 2024).</p> <p>One area of concern that AJU is anticipating is the completion rate for the EdD due to the dissertation; AJU and the ECE directors are working internally with guidance from other doctoral programs to develop policies and best practices to support students through the dissertation writing process.</p>	
<p><i>Student Learning.</i> How does the institution assess student learning for online programs and courses? Is this process comparable to that used in on-ground courses? What are the results of student learning assessment? How do these compare with learning results of on-ground students, if applicable, or with other online offerings?</p>	<p>AJU’s dean of institutional effectiveness works with the directors for distance education programs and faculty of distance education courses to conduct annual program learning outcomes (PLO) assessment. The review takes place annually. Student work samples are reviewed and analyzed—the same as with its in-person program. AJU provides the external reviewers with <a href="#">AJU Academic Program Review Guidelines and Process</a> to aid in the completion of the review.</p>	<p>Ensure that program reviews for the BA, MA, and EdD stay on track to be completed as listed on the schedule.</p>

<p><i>Contracts with Vendors.</i> Are there any arrangements with outside vendors concerning the infrastructure, delivery, development, or instruction of courses? If so, do these comport with the policy on <i>Agreements with Unaccredited Entities</i>?</p>	<p>Arrangements with outside vendors that support the infrastructure of the distance education courses include: AJU’s IT vendor, XOverture, the Canvas by Instructure learning management system, the Populi student information system, Turn It In system for plagiarism detection, Zoom video conferencing software for synchronous class learning, and Microsoft Office 365. All systems and software comply with the policy.</p>	
<p><i>Quality Assurance Processes:</i> How are the institution’s quality assurance processes designed or modified to cover distance education? What evidence is provided that distance education programs and courses are educationally effective?</p>	<p>Given that the distance education degrees are new to AJU, a program review has not yet been conducted for them. However, the academic administration is planning to select external reviewers during the summer 2024 for its BA distance ed degree, which is scheduled to be reviewed in 2024-25.</p>	<p>Ensure that program reviews for the BA, MA, and EdD stay on track to be completed as listed on the schedule.</p>

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

1. Courses reviewed (as appropriate; please list)
  
2. Nature of review (material examined and persons/committees interviewed)

<p><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?</p>		
<p><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?</p>		
<p><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?</p>		
<p><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”?</p>		

<p><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?</p>		
<p><i>Student Identification Verification and Privacy.</i> What is the institution’s process for student verification, e.g., a secure login and pass code; proctored examinations; other technologies or practices that are effective in verifying student identification? What precautions are taken by the institution to protect technology from cyber security intrusions on its or outsourced systems? Are additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity disclosed at the time of registration or enrollment?</p>		
<p><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?</p>		

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*Revised April 2023*