



## **Self-Study Evaluation Team Report**

*23 March 2023*

**National Defense University  
Self-Study Evaluation Team Visit: 12-15 March 2023**

### ***Section A: Institutional Representatives***

#### **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/President**

Lieutenant General Michael T. Plehn, USAF, President

#### **Chief Academic Officer**

Dr. James Lepse, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

#### **Chief Financial Officer**

Ms. Barbara Gilchrist

#### **Chair of the Board of Trustees**

General Norton Schwartz, USAF (Ret)—Board Chair

### ***Section B: Institutional Context***

The National Defense University (NDU) is an institution of higher education funded by the Department of Defense. NDU provides executive-level education, training, and professional development for national security leaders. The mission of NDU is to educate joint warfighters and other national security leaders in critical thinking and the creative application of military power to inform national strategy and globally integrated operations, under conditions of disruptive change, in order to prevail in war, peace, and competition.

The University consists of five schools/colleges:

- College of International Security Affairs (CISA)
- Dwight D. Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy
- College of Information and Cyberspace (CIC)
- Joint Forces Staff College (JFSC)
- National War College

Each college is authorized to grant master's degrees in its respective area of academic expertise. Four of the colleges reside at Fort McNair in Washington D.C.; JFSC is in Norfolk, Virginia. In addition, the University offers the CISA Master's degree at Fort Bragg, North Carolina and

periodically offers joint professional military education (JPME) certificate programs at combatant command locations.

Under the direction of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, NDU offers a variety of academic programs in a collegial and collaborative academic environment. The Chairman defines the objectives and policies for joint education.

Recent years have been a dynamic and challenging period for NDU. In addition to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the global security environment has proven to be ever-changing; characterized by geopolitical shifts, disruptive technological advances, and a changing character of warfare. NDU has had to deal with deteriorating academic facilities, budgetary restrictions, staffing challenges, and a proposed transformation plan that would have consolidated several existing programs and closed two of the five colleges. The University recognized these challenges and implemented appropriate actions to address these challenges while simultaneously continuing the educational and research mission and identifying opportunities for institutional improvement. Added to the complexity was the September 2021 Secretary of Defense suspension of all defense advisory boards pending a zero-based review. The NDU Board of Visitors was reconstituted in 2022 and held its first meeting in May 2022.

The University has overcome the more significant challenges noted in previous accreditation visits and reviews; however, opportunities remain for attaining higher levels of excellence. Information technology has improved, but faculty, staff, and students are largely dissatisfied with the availability of reliable wireless internet access. The University has a student information system that meets minimal requirements but needs additional development to provide desired levels of support. A demand from external stakeholders for additional classified instruction requires funding to build or renovate instructional spaces designed for such a purpose. All these initiatives require additional financial support for program execution.

Another consideration worth mentioning is the fact that NDU has had five provosts over the past four years. This lack of continuity resulted in the absence of some key overarching policies and synchronization efforts that would help better align the educational efforts of the University; e.g., uniform application of the grading policy. A new Provost took office in December 2022 and understands the need for such synchronization.

A steering committee and eight workgroups produced a self-study that was comprehensive, inclusive, collaborative, and transparent. Working groups were well-represented with staff and faculty from across the colleges and schools. The intended outcomes of the review included the following:

- demonstrate that NDU meets the Standards for Accreditation and requirements of affiliation
- emerge from the process with heightened dedication to continuous improvement
- engage in an inclusive and transparent self-appraisal process
- inspire a culture of collaboration, innovation, and fiscal responsibility
- inform a new Strategic Plan, which will include metrics and an evaluation plan.

During the site visits, the review team had the opportunity to interact with a wide range of individuals who have been involved with the preparation of the self-study or who possess specialized information relevant for the Team's review, as well as discussions with Institutions senior leadership and key decision-makers. These meetings included opportunities to discuss educational issues with faculty, staff, administrators, and students. A summary of those individuals or groups consulted during the site visit follows:

- Lt Gen Plehn, USAF, NDU President
- Dr. Jim Lepse, Provost
- Ms. Katherine Kolbe, Chief Operating Officer
- Self-study working group team chairs
- Board of Visitors
- Open sessions with students, staff, and faculty
- Focused sessions on each standard

### *Section C: Requirements of Affiliation*

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet all the requirements of affiliation.

This judgment is based on a review of the self-study report, documented evidence, and interviews with institutional constituencies to clarify information and verify compliance during the self-study evaluation team visit.

NDU provided clear evidence that the institution is appropriately licensed; is educating students; and complies with applicable laws, policies, and regulations. The University has an appropriate mission and goals and evaluates its programs and institutional processes. Educational programs appear coherent and rigorous; this was confirmed by interviews with students and faculty. The University regularly communicates with the Commission.

Despite on-going challenges with staff hiring and deterioration of some historic buildings, NDU has sufficient facilities and resources to educate its student population. The University receives annual funding through the Joint Chiefs of Staff and there is evidence to believe that this funding will continue at acceptable, but not desired levels, into the foreseeable future. A documented institutional planning process allows for the assessment of student learning and program effectiveness.

The Board of Visitors meets the intent of a governing body and has appropriate responsibilities given the nature of the institution with no apparent conflicts of interest. The BOV was candid and transparent in its role and in the challenges facing NDU. NDU appears to have sufficient faculty with appropriate credentials to deliver a high-quality education to all students.



## Section D: Standards for Accreditation

### Standard I: Mission and Goals

**The institution's mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the institution fulfills its mission.**

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

This judgment is based on a review of the self-study report, evidence, and interviews with institutional constituencies to clarify information and verify compliance during the self-study evaluation team visit.

### Summary of Findings

- The institutional mission and vision are articulated in CJCSI1801.01F *National Defense University Policy* dated 14 October 2022. The institutional mission clearly defines the purpose of the institution, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. It is articulated in the Self-Study and the NDU Strategic Plan *Realizing the Vision 2022–2027*. The role of NDU within the context of higher education is outlined in CJCSI1800.01F *Officer Professional Military Education* dated 15 May 2020.
- As stated in the Self-Study “the complete NDU mission set...is provided by the Joint Staff...and is reviewed and updated on a scheduled basis” by the Joint Staff. The mission has been revised with each new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which has served as the periodic review.
- The institutional goals were approved by the NDU Board of Visitors as communicated to the NDU president via letter on 3 June 2022. The institutional goals are clearly linked to the mission and specify, in broad terms, how it accomplishes its mission. They are articulated in the Self-Study and the 2 goals and 3 strategic priorities and 3 lines of effort that come from them are articulated and described in the NDU Strategic Plan.
- The mission has been widely publicized through various means, including the Self-Study and the NDU Strategic Plan. In addition, they have been briefed at Town Halls and meetings of the Board of Visitors with approximately 300 faculty and staff members attending such meetings now that they include an option for attending online (*Self-Study – February 2, 2023*)
- The NDU Strategic Plan was clearly developed to realize the mission and vision and the strategic goals are directly aligned with them.

## Collegial Advice

- The two strategic goals are extremely broad and, while they describe a high-quality educational environment, they fail to specify how their attainment would lead to NDU preparing its graduates to meet environments specifically articulated in the mission statement. The three strategic priorities and three lines of effort that come from them are articulated and described in the Strategic Plan. They provide detail that would be well-articulated in the goals themselves or included as additional goals. We recommend the addition of more detail from the three strategic priorities and three lines of effort be added to the current goals in order to ensure they are approved by the Board of Visitors as goals of NDU.
- The frequent turnover in presidents and commandants creates churn at the senior level that individuals interviewed expressed results in some instability. We recommend working to create a greater sense of stability by developing the strategic planning process as listed in the *Recommended Institutional Actions* with a clear timeline and staggering turnover of senior leaders.
- As stated in the mission section of the strategic plan, NDU aspires to be “the Nation’s premier national security educational institution” (NDU Strategic Plan). In order to set benchmarks, goals, and metrics for assessment of this goal, the team recommends the following:
  - Identify a list of peer institutions against which to benchmark NDU, such as the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom (<https://www.da.mod.uk>) and France’s l’École de Guerre (<https://ecoledeguerre.paris/presentation/>).
  - Determine metrics to measure NDU against these institutions. Such metrics could include measures of both individual and institutional accomplishments, such as:
    - Individual accomplishments might include career success of alumni and recognition of faculty expertise such as by publications in prestigious journals, invitations to speak at conferences and serve as consultants and subject matter experts, commissioned research by national defense-related agencies and organizations, and so forth.
    - Institutional accomplishments might include increasing the number of students from outside the USA, hosting international conferences, producing internationally recognized research, publications, and so forth

**Team Recommendation(s)** None

**Requirement(s)** None

**Recognition of Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

- The institution is to be commended for its flexibility and commitment to accomplishing its mission, conducting the self-study, and drafting a strategic plan despite challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, having a building offline, and operating without a Board of Visitors from January 30, 2021 to May 24, 2022.

## **Standard II: Ethics and Integrity**

**Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and defining hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful to its mission, honor its contracts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully.**

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

This judgment is based on a review of the self-study report, evidence, and interviews with institutional constituencies to clarify information and verify compliance during the self-study evaluation team visit.

### **Summary of Findings**

- The principles of ethics and integrity incorporated within the policies and practices of the National Defense University are evident in the materials presented in the Self-Study and enumerated in the Strategic Plan's Core Values and Guiding Principles (website: Mission & Vision, Strategic Plan). Evidence is presented as a Directive, Statement, or Guidance Letter and its incorporation into faculty handbooks and practices. Directives, statements, once approved are released via an intranet portal. The team is mindful of the distinct composition of faculty, staff, and student body in this review.
- Academic freedom is a cornerstone value of the Strategic Plan and NDU policies. Documentation included NDU Directive on Professional Ethics and policies on Non-Attribution and Academic Freedom (Faculty Handbook). The NDU policies on academic freedom and non-attribution are also included in the Student Handbooks for all component schools.
- NDU's Core Values and Guiding Principles reflect the institution's dedication to fostering a climate of respect among all constituents (Strategic Plan). Upon his arrival at NDU, the president released guidance to promote a climate of mutual respect among all participants in the NDU community. Some initiatives include expanding recruitment efforts to attract applicants of diverse backgrounds, celebrating historical and cultural events throughout their calendar (NDU Special Observances F23). The institution has initiated *Women in National Security* organizations at four NDU colleges at Fort McNair. JFSC is integrating *Women, Peace, and Security* themes in JAWS and JCWS curriculum (Combined WINS Charters and Reports). Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training for faculty and staff has been encouraged through attendance in a Foundation course and Issues and Skills electives during AY22. In discussions with leadership, it was shared a second year of funding was not issued. NDU is pursuing a strategy to meet GDEIB benchmarks and Executive order 14035; results are not available currently.
- The *Student Complaint Policy and Procedures* document resides in the Course Catalog. For students enrolled through JFSC, additional policy information was provided. All faculty, staff, and students can speak with NDU's president regarding any issue the individual feels has not been satisfactorily resolved through the standard procedures (NDU President's Open Door Policy). NDU's website includes the policy under the



Academics tab/ Academic Policies. The CIC Faculty Handbook contains procedures to report harassment. Additional instructions for service branch members and civilians regarding the Equal Opportunity program and prohibitions of unlawful discrimination, harassment, and reprisal were in evidence. Conversations with the Staff Advisory Council noted a lack of clear procedures to report issues as there is no Equal Employment Opportunity Office on campus.

- Guidance on conflicts of interest is detailed in the Compilation of Federal Ethics Laws. Specific information for all DOD employees regarding mandatory training, including ethics training, is provided in evidence.
- The Faculty Handbook discusses the criteria and process for promotion, renewal, and non-renewals. Each component college has its own handbook that combines NDU policy with individual college policies (Combined Faculty Handbooks). The current policy regarding criteria for promotion and title rank changes at NDU became effective in January 2023. The policy includes flow charts and appendices that describe the criteria for promotion based on the title of the faculty and support personnel as well as termination policies (Titling and Promotion of NDU Faculty and Academic Support Personnel).
- NDU's home page and component school pages include announcements regarding program registration and admission information and application. NDU's Incoming Students tab lists requirements for all NDU students and any other school requirements. NDU's guiding principles embrace the institution's culture of collaboration to "*foster and promote transparent, inclusive, and complimentary processes and decision making*" (Vision and Mission).
- Data on student achievement and student enrollment are available on NDU's web pages (About/ Institutional Data; Academics/ Student Achievement). The Team was given access to the most recent Federal Compliance Report and a Requirements of Affiliation roadmap.
- NDU's Organization and Function Regulation clearly describes the roles and responsibilities of the various organizations to support the transparent operation of the University. Joint Chief Staff Vision for professional military education regularly provides guidance to the program. Some exemplars assign the responsibilities of the component heads to ensuring the integrity, and consistency with applicable regulations, of component and University processes with a special emphasis on fair and impartial processes for faculty hiring, and professional development. Internal advisory councils publish records of meetings prior to recommendations being forwarded to another governing group for action or decision. Meeting records are generally made available to the campus population via the NDU Knowledge Management Team and are posted on the University Intranet site (Advisory Council charters). An external advisory council is the Board of Visitors whose charge is to provide advice and recommendations on the overall management and governance of NDU including accreditation compliance, organizational management, strategic planning, resource management, and other matters. The BOV has sufficient autonomy to ensure independent advice and to assure

institutional integrity (NDU Organizations and Functions). Evidence and meetings with faculty, staff, leadership indicate a working process that periodically reviews the ethics and integrity of the institution through its policies, practices, and implementation.

### **Collegial Advice**

- The Team encourages NDU to continue with its efforts to define and implement a strategy to address diversity, equity, and inclusion across the institution.
- The team encourages NDU to continue the work of the Ethics Program Coordinating Committee and develop an ethics curriculum program across the 5 colleges.
- The team suggest all Faculty Handbooks be made available on the website so potential applicants for faculty positions can gain an understanding of the nature of the University.

**Team Recommendation(s)** None

**Requirement(s)** None

### **Recognition of Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

- The faculty and staff are commended for their use of Teams and Share Point as an avenue to communicate across shareholders.

### **Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience**

**An institution provides students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence of all program, certificate, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality. All learning experiences, regardless of modality, program pace/schedule, and setting are consistent with higher education expectations.**

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

This judgment is based on a review of the self-study report, evidence, and interviews with institutional constituencies to clarify information and verify compliance during the self-study evaluation team visit.

#### **Summary of Findings**

- The institution offers five master's degree programs in a 10-month format that consist of between 33 and 38 credit hours and several graduate certificate programs (NDU *Catalog* AY23) with program alignment to institutional learning outcomes (*Program Learning Outcomes* AY23).
- The faculty consists of a mixture of members with terminal degrees and members with professional experience sufficient in number. The requirement for military and civilian faculty is articulated in the Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP). The institution relies on MSCHE for institutional accreditation and the Process for Accreditation of Joint Education for programmatic alignment of their unique mission (JFSCI 1025.02 Curriculum Development; CJCSI 1800.01F dated 15 May 2020; NDU Selection of Military-MOA-Civilian faculty; MSCHE 13 Mar 23; Faculty Degrees and Subject Areas – Oct 2022; NDU Instruction 1416.01; Student to Faculty Ratio 2021-2023; AA Note 23-02 (19 Oct 22))
- Faculty are allowed to apply for sabbatical leave to pursue scholarly inquiry if the teaching ratios within their colleges are satisfactory (NDUI 1416.02 NDU Sabbatical Program; Sabbatical History). New faculty members benefit from a mentoring process that allows for feedback and guidance before being assigned independent teaching duties (Combined Faculty Handbooks AY20 to AY22; JFSCI 1025.03 Faculty Development Program).
- Faculty evaluation policies and procedures are detailed in NDU 1416.01B *Civilian Faculty Employment and Compensation*. NDU teaching faculty are evaluated annually based on the elements of a traditional academic model that includes Teaching, Research, Engagement, Service, and Accountability (TRESA). The process for promotion within the academic ranks is outlined in the NDU Directive 1404.02B *Titling & Promotion of*

*NDU Faculty and Academic Support Personnel (BOV Readahead Performance Reviews).*

- The institution clearly articulated academic program offerings through the annual publication of a university course and elective catalog for each upcoming year (NDU Course Catalog AY23; NDU Electives Catalog AY23).
- The team found evidence of opportunities and resources that support academic progress in faculty advising programs, library services, and a writing center that supports all of the colleges (Student Handbook).
- Beyond the research papers and thesis requirements of the degree programs offered by the colleges, students are encouraged to apply to the National Scholars Program to pursue their topics more deeply (NDU Scholars Factsheet AY22). The university's Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) has specialized research centers that support student education and scholarship and produce books, journals, occasional papers, policy papers, and case studies to inform the national and international security community.
- The team found evidence of a climate that fosters respect for DEI through training, active affinity groups, and programs supporting the Women Peace and Security Act as discussed in Standard II. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy currently under review by NDU leadership does not make any recommendation related to inclusive teaching practices and their assessment. Conversations with leadership, faculty, and staff revealed an interest in assessing and exploring strategies for inclusive pedagogy.
- Conversations with faculty, staff, and students all revealed both a lack of awareness of the process for the protection of human subjects in research and where to seek further guidance. Currently, the process is overseen by the NDU Director of Institutional Research. The policy has not been updated to reflect the most recent DODI instruction (National Defense University Policy Research Review and Use of Human Subjects).
- The institution confirmed through the self-study that it currently does not offer, and has no plans to offer, learning opportunities provided by third parties.
- Since May 2020 the institution has been implementing Outcomes-based Military Education (OBME) to assess the effectiveness of student learning opportunities against Program Learning Outcomes (CJCSM 1810.01 *Outcomes-based Military Education Procedures for OBME*). All colleges within the institution have begun the OBME implementation cycle but have progressed at different rates. The formal annual appraisal provides periodic assessment of classroom effectiveness with discussions, end-of-course student surveys, and supervisor classroom observations (Faculty Observation Form Examples; End of Course Student Surveys). Course reflection examples offered by three of the colleges provide insight on the assessment cycle that included a summary of direct

and indirect assessments as well as faculty recommendations for delivery during the next iteration (Close the loop reports for MSCHE, CISA Course Memo and Assessment).

### **Collegial Advice**

- The institution should continue work assessing challenges and opportunities for inclusion within the institution and extend the conversation to the design and delivery of an inclusive student learning experience within the classroom.

### **Team Recommendations**

The institution should provide further evidence regarding opportunities for research related to the protection of human subjects and scholarship, including the following:

- NDU policy regarding research needs to be updated to comply with DODI 3216.02 *Protection of Human Subjects and Adherence to Ethical Standards in DoD-Conducted and Supported Research*, dated June 29, 2022.
- Clear processes need to be developed to adhere to DODI 3216.02 so that properly trained personnel review research proposals for projects that would include human subjects.
- Clear communications to all faculty and students regarding the need for review of projects that will include human subjects, the office of primary responsibility for conducting such reviews, and the procedures to be followed.

**Requirement(s)** None

### **Recognition of Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

- The team acknowledges the extraordinary efforts of the IT Department, Library, Writing Center staff, and college faculty.

## **Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience**

**Across all educational experiences, settings, levels, and instructional modalities, the institution recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with its mission and educational offerings. The institution commits to student retention, persistence, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributes to the educational experience, and fosters student success.**

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

This judgment is based on a review of the self-study report, evidence, and interviews with institutional constituencies to clarify information and verify compliance during the self-study evaluation team visit.

### **Summary of Findings**

- An examination of NDU's self-study document, supporting evidence, and follow-up meetings with students, faculty, and staff highlighted an institution with a diverse and impressive student body. These students are supported by staff and faculty who are dedicated, professional, and knowledgeable. The support provided to students is a mixture of both university-level and college-level staff.
- The team verified evidence that the university generally maintains clearly stated policies that aid in admitting, retaining, and facilitating the success of its students through orientation, advisement, and counseling.
- Because of the varied structure of the colleges and academic programs, the team verified that students have a very different experience based on their college and location across the NDU footprint in Washington, Norfolk, and Fayetteville.
- Constrained resources have led to difficulty providing necessary services such as functional internet access that contributes to the successful achievement of students' educational goals.
- The team found varying policies related to the assessment of student writing at the time of admission to the university. The absence of consistent policies related to the assessment of student writing at the time of admission across the entire university portfolio provides a risk to student success.

### **Collegial Advice**

- Standardize the student experience by providing consistent student services across colleges and physical locations.

- Increase library access for students at Fort McNair to be more consistent with library services provided at JFSC.

**Team Recommendation(s)** None

**Recognition of Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

- The team acknowledges the extraordinary efforts of the IT Department, Library and Writing Center staff who provide important support services to students inside and outside of the classroom.

## **Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment**

**Assessment of student learning and achievement demonstrates that the institution's students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their programs of study, degree level, the institution's mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education.**

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

This judgment is based on a review of the self-study report, evidence, and interviews with institutional constituencies to clarify information and verify compliance during the self-study evaluation team visit.

### **Summary of Findings**

- Through the Memorandum for Deans and Faculty on Policy Guidance for Curriculum, the CIC Assessment Handbook, Faculty Handbooks, and Joint Chiefs of Staff instructions the team found expectations of assessment of student learning outcomes consistent with good practices of higher education.
- The team found clearly articulated institutional outcomes, that were determined through a collaborative process, and that reinforce the institution's unique and focused mission. Additionally, through the Combined Outcomes Map document and the Curriculum Maps, for the Eisenhower School and National War College, the team found alignment of masters degree and college program learning with the institutional outcomes. In meetings with staff the team determined that for many certificate programs the alignment of certificate learning outcomes and their respective program learning outcomes is planned.
- The team confirmed in a meeting with students that written and rubric-driven feedback from faculty (and noted in the self-study p.61) is a strength within many programs and is particularly helpful for international students.
- Robust indirect assessment processes were verified within each college. Methods of indirect assessment included student, faculty, and alumni surveys; focus groups; retention and graduation rates; and informal feedback from stakeholders (p.28, 62, and 63).
- According to the self-study and meetings with Institutional Research, Associate Deans, and Course Directors, direct assessment of student learning outcomes began in earnest in academic year 2021. The Academic Year 2022-23 Curriculum Briefs from the Eisenhower School provided evidence of organized assessment of course and program learning outcomes, direct and indirect assessment of student achievement, and actionable results. Other examples provided in the Close the Loop documentation, focused on indirect assessments of course learning outcomes mapped to program learning outcomes and plans to fully integrate direct assessment of student learning. While progress is being



made, the team did not find systematic and sustained evidence that direct assessment was used to evaluate the programs across the institution.

- In meetings with staff and faculty, and within the text of the self-study (p.60 and 68), it was noted that the colleges are in the process of implementing Outcomes Based Military Education (including direct and authentic assessment of student learning). Further, it was indicated in the self-study and meetings with Institutional Research that regular reports on the achievement of program learning outcomes will be a part of the Joint Professional Military Education accreditation of the individual colleges (P. 68)

### **Collegial Advice**

- Complete the mapping of certificate learning outcomes to the program learning outcomes to facilitate assessment processes.
- Further implementation, within all colleges, of organized and systematic methods for regularly involving internal stakeholders in the interpretation and use of assessment results for program improvement.
- Consider creating a short, templated memo from each of the colleges to NDU to annually provide a summary of collection and analysis methods for both direct and indirect assessments (aligned with the PLOs and ILOs) and any significant actions taken resulting from the assessment process.

### **Team Recommendations**

The institution should provide further evidence of:

- The implementation of organized and systematic direct assessments that evaluate the extent of student achievement within programs.
- Providing sufficient support to sustain the assessment of student achievement and to communicate results of assessment to stakeholders.
- Documented and sustained use of direct assessment results to improve educational effectiveness of offered programs.
- Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of assessment processes used by the institution for the improvement of educational effectiveness.

### **Requirement(s) None**

### **Recognition of Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

- The steps the institution has taken toward becoming compliant with OBME expectations in a relatively short period of time are noteworthy.

- A best practice within the curriculum maps was information about the courses and assignments that align with course and program learning outcomes.
- Students commented that across the institution that faculty widely share rubrics within syllabi and are open to receiving feedback regarding alignment with assignments. Faculty also indicate best practices in norming rubrics, assignments, and grading is occurring.

## **Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement**

**The institution's planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.**

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

This judgment is based on a review of the self-study report, evidence, and interviews with institutional constituencies to clarify information and verify compliance during the self-study evaluation team visit.

### **Summary of Findings**

- National Defense University (NDU) continues to educate Joint Warfighters and other National security leaders via its colleges, centers, and geographically dispersed facilities. The university serves students from the Armed Forces, government agencies, and international military organizations.
- With the approval of its 2022 Strategic Plan, NDU is developing a synchronized Implementation Plan with annexes from each component linking their strategic goals, priorities, and LOEs to clear, measurable, achievable, and timely objectives. The evidence, dating back to 2017, demonstrates NDUs financial planning and budgeting process alignment with previous and current mission and goals.
- NDU's self-study identified their need for comprehensive data and knowledge management strategies, automation, and analytics. Business process transformations and three strategic plans over the last decade have challenged reliable measurement and assessment, making it difficult to see the progress toward long-term outcomes.
- The establishment of a chartered Faculty Advisory Council (2017) and Staff Advisory Council (2019) have enabled constituent participation, counsel, advice, and recommendations to NDU decision-makers.
- The revenues for the institution come primarily from US government agencies. The funding received seems adequate to fulfill the mission and vision of the NDU. After examining the financial information provided, it is evident that NDU actively recommends (near- and long-term financial requirements) via the DOD Program Objective Memorandum (POM) process and issue papers as needed. This process allows the institution to annually update its plan to allocate resources (and funding) for its colleges/components to meet its articulated missions and goals. Sustainable future funding is a concern for NDU, so much so that securing "stable resources" is an institutional priority.
- Human Resources (HR) seem adequate. The self-study highlights budget pressures and significant personnel cuts over the last decade – confirmed during the site visit

discussions. NDU has implemented various HR initiatives (e.g., incorporating dedicated staffing specialists) and commissioned a Definitive Logic Corporation (DLC) assessment of NDU's Academic and Business Support Manpower and Workload.

- The facilities seem adequate for carrying out the mission and programs of NDU but need repair. Funding for new projects, repairs, rehabilitations, and critical maintenance comes primarily from defense and other governmental sources. In 2021 a multiyear phased Capital Investment Strategy (CIS) survey was completed that established a plan for \$173 million in capital investment over the next ten years. NDU has submitted proposals to obtain this funding.
- Technology seems adequate for current academic and administrative needs. NDU is undergoing a multiyear IT enterprise modernization effort to improve bandwidth and network reliability and develop an Educational Data Management Platform.

### **Collegial Advice**

- NDU might find efficiencies in conducting its periodic assessment of the effectiveness of planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal by leveraging its Risk Management Internal Control subject matter expertise and updates to corresponding JSI guidance. For the institution and components, internal controls could be developed for NDU's plans, processes, and policies and incorporated into its RMIC assessment plan. This may possibly reduce the burden of program reviews and surveys. [STD 6.9]
- Consider capturing in an NDU publication how the institution will plan, resource, and assess any changes made because of the findings of Business Process Documentation [608] and DLC assessment of NDU's Academic and Business Support Manpower and Workload [532], but also future identified improvement findings and actions. [STD 6.2 & 4]
- Through the self-study and confirmed conversations with various stakeholders, the current command leadership's encouragement of the NDU constituents to participate in shared governance and University Town Halls is evident. Consider the upcoming revision of NDUR 5100.01 adding the Staff Advisory Council (SAC) to the other councils mentioned in paragraph 3.2 Advisory Councils. As the SAC is voluntary, consider incentivizing member participation to ensure representation from across the institution. [STD 6.2 & 5]

### **Team Recommendation**

- The institution should provide further evidence of developing and implementing organized and systematic assessments that evaluate institutional effectiveness. The 2022-2027 NDU Strategic Plan articulates institutional objectives. Still, it also outlines NDU's next step is developing a university-wide, component-driven Implementation Plan with

specific goals and measurable milestones to chart its progress. NDU Strategic Plan describes the inclusion of annexes from each component in the to-be-developed implementation plan that would link their strategic goals, priorities, and LOEs to clear, measurable, achievable, and timely objectives. The team understood that this next step is paused while the NDU's strategic plan is socialized first throughout the institution. [STD 6.1]

**Requirement(s)** None

**Recognition of Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

- Overcoming the changes unique to the Joint environment – the team commends the Resource Management Directorate, University Resource Counsel, and other team members for their efforts in planning, advocating, and obtaining funding to carry out innovative changes, construction, and updating of new facilities and technology upgrades for students, faculty, and Staff.

## **Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration**

**The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that effectively benefits the institution, its students, and the other constituents it serves. Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, religious, educational system, or other unaccredited organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.**

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Based on a review of the self-study report, evidence, and interviews with campus constituencies to clarify information and verify compliance during the on-site evaluation visit, the team draws the following conclusions relative to this standard.

### **Summary of Findings**

- As part of the Department of Defense, NDU's governance is distributed among the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), the Board of Visitors (BoV), and various administrative offices. The University appears to have clearly articulated and accessible policies and guidelines that outline governance structures, organization, and roles and responsibilities of NDU leadership, governing body administration, BoV, and advisory councils including the executive council, deans' council, and advisory councils for faculty and staff.
- NDU's legally constituted governance body is the BoV, which shares governance with the CJCS. The BoV appears to have sufficient independence and expertise to ensure the integrity of the institution. As mandated by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), the BoV appears to comply with established conflict of interest policies for advisory committees with regular disclosures for integrity and impartiality. The BoV appears to be active, informed, and involved in overseeing the direction and quality of teaching and learning at the policy level without interfering in the day-to-day operations of the university.
- Supporting evidence shows that the BoV provides regular support for the NDU President as the chief executive officer in maintaining the University's autonomy, especially in academic affairs. The BoV also performs periodical assessment of the performance and the effectiveness of the NDU leadership, including the NDU President and makes recommendations to the CJCS.
- NDU operates under the executive authority of the NDU President (NDU-P), who is appointed and evaluated by the CJCS and does not chair the governing body of BoV. The current NDU President is well qualified, engaged with various aspects of the university, and has support from qualified administrators. Supporting evidence shows that NDU's administration has established systematic procedures for evaluating administrative units and using assessment data to enhance operations.

### **Collegial Advice**

- The supporting evidence shows detailed descriptions of NDU's organizational structure, offices and responsibilities. However, not all reporting relationships are clearly defined or consistent. For example, having the academic leadership of individual colleges directly report to and rated by the Provost/Chief Academic Officer may bring more efficiency and consistency in establishing and implementing academic policies to achieve institutional learning outcomes.
- Several staff voiced concerns over current levels of understaffing. It is advised that NDU review the size of the organizational structure to determine and implement any necessary changes.

### **Recommendations**

- The institution should provide further evidence of documented plans or schedules for periodic assessment of the effectiveness of the BoV as the oversight governance body. It is recommended that the BoV establish and document a formal plan and schedule for periodic assessment of the performance and effectiveness of the BoV for continuous improvement.

**Requirements** None.

### **Recognition of Accomplishments, Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

- The team commends the current NDU President, General Plehn, for personally teaching an NDU concentration course, which demonstrates his first-hand engagement and strong commitment to the University's mission of teaching and learning.

### ***Section E: Applicable Federal Regulatory Requirements***

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet all applicable federal regulatory requirements.

This judgment is based on a review of the Institutional Federal Compliance Report, evidence, and interviews with institutional constituencies to clarify information and verify compliance during the team visit.

### ***Section F: Review of Student Achievement and Verification of Institutional Data***

#### **I. Student Achievement Goals**

In the team's judgment, the institution's approach to realizing its student achievement goals appears to be effective, consonant with higher education expectations, and consistent with the institution's mission.

This judgment is based on a review of the institution's student achievement information provided in the self-study report, evidence, interviews with institutional constituencies, and the student achievement URL available on its website.

In addition, in the team's judgment, the institution's student achievement information data that it discloses to the public appear to be reasonably valid and accurate in light of other data and information reviewed by the team.

#### **II. Verification of Institutional Data**

In the team's opinion, the institution's processes and procedures that it uses to verify institutional data and the data provided in the self-study report appear to be reasonably valid and effective. Data was confirmed through a review of documented evidence, interviews with staff and faculty, and discussions with senior institutional leadership. The processes and procedures used to collect and report these data appear to be reasonably valid and effective.

### ***Section G: Review of Third-Party Comments***

No third-party comments were received for this review.

### ***Section H: List of Additional Evidence***

- Combined writing diagnostic information sheets
- Dean's Guidance Memo indicates an AY22 PLO Assessment Report.



- CJCSM 1810.01 progress on biennial template in appendix B to enclosure
- Submissions for review by J7 and corresponding documents for non PME programs to the extent that they address the standard.
- Evidence of closing the loop on the assessment of educational goals
- Alignment of Certificate and Masters outcomes with Program Learning Outcomes
- Meeting with course directors to confirm the use of assessment of student learning results for improving programs.
- Documentation demonstrating how objectives are assessed and linked to mission and goal achievement.
- Documentation that fiscal resources are adequate to support operations.
- Plans or contingencies if requirements remain unmet or if maintenance and necessary work continue to be deferred; e.g., examples of Plan of Action and Milestones (POAMs) or funding approvals.
- Documentation clarifying NDU's periodic assessment of the effectiveness of planning, resource allocation, institutional renewal processes, and availability of resources; e.g., examples of completed program reviews and previously submitted Statements of Assurance to see the complete periodic assessment process.
- Plan to meet with the staff of the University Implementation Office and NDU Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and others who can answer questions on continuous assessment and improvement.
- Any documentation to explain the reasons from DoD for eliminating CIC and any proposals and discussions on this issue from NDU's shared governance.
- Established procedures for periodic assessment along with findings on the effectiveness of BoV as part of the shared governance of NDU
- Data of student complaint resolution.
- Examples of institution ethics or integrity issues/resolution that might relate to Criterion II.9.
- Documentation on how student-faculty ratios are calculated, description of who is included in faculty by type, and other supporting information; e.g., class sizes (in person, distance, hybrid).
- Describe/provide documentation on how processes are implemented to ensure faculty and other professionals are qualified for the work they do and the number of terminal degrees by college, by type of faculty; e.g. title 10, professors of practice, military, other agencies.
- Documentation showing when/what/type college sabbaticals were awarded to ensure faculty are provided and utilize sufficient opportunities, resources, and support for professional growth and innovation.
- Completion rate of mid-point reviews for faculty and staff to ensure support for professional growth.
- Use of survey results to promote the learning experience at each college and the institution as a whole.
- Validation, changes, modifications, and/or updates to syllabi and classroom management as a result of:
  - Surveys/feedback/peer coaches/annual appraisals
  - Annual off-sites

- Professional development on pedagogy
- DEI training, foundation/elective courses, and consultant team work (inclusive teaching)

### ***Section I: Self-Study Report and Process Comments***

The team commends the leadership, faculty, staff, and students of the National Defense University for their tremendous effort in preparing for this periodic reaffirmation of academic accreditation. The self-study was well designed and introspective in nature and provided a candid assessment of the strengths of the institution as well as opportunities for continued institutional improvement. The team visit was well coordinated, informative, and extremely productive. The team also wishes to highlight the commendable efforts of Dr. John Yaeger, Ms. Kelly Hart, Ms. Jen Laski, Ms. Jen Russell, Mr. Ryan Jungdahl, Ms. Kim Toumey, and Ms. Lindsey DeCoursey for their selfless service and commitment to institutional success.