REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM

SPECIAL VISIT

To New York Film Academy

March 30 – April 2, 2021

Team Roster

Team Chair:
Tomoko Takahashi, Vice President for Institutional Research and Assessment
Soka University of America

Team Assistant Chair:
Patty Mullen, Associate Provost, Institutional Research
Alliant International University

Team Members:
Robert Allison, Vice President for Business and Finance, Retired
Vanguard University of Southern California

Betty Sundberg, Educational Consultant

WSCUC Liaison:
Barbara Gross Davis, Vice President

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.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT .................................................................................. 3

A. Description of Institution, Accreditation History, and Visit .............................................. 3
B. Description of Team’s Review Process ............................................................................. 5
C. Institution’s Special Visit Report: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence ................................................................................................................................. 5

SECTION II – TEAM’S EVALUATION OF ISSUES UNDER THE STANDARDS .......... 6

Issue A: Examine and modify English language proficiency standards and support services to enable admitted students to be successful in their chosen programs and consistently meet student learning outcomes. (CFRs 1.6, 1.7, 2.6, 2.13) ......................................................................................................................... 6
Issue B: Continue to evaluate and improve recruitment and admissions structures and practices to ensure new student enrollment goals are attained with students capable of completing their chosen programs. (CFRs 1.7, 3.7) .......................................................................................................................... 11
Issue C: Improve communication strategies, and after stakeholders have had the opportunity to provide appropriate input into decisions, ensure that important matters are shared with the community in a timely manner. (CFR 1.7, 3.6, 3.7) .......................................................................................................................... 14
Issue D: Continue to address issues of faculty workload, compensation, and performance evaluation. (CFR 2.9, 3.1, 3.2) ........................................................................................................................................ 17
Issue E: Provide physical space for the confidential interviewing, tutoring, and advising of prospective and current students. (CFR 3.5) ........................................................................................................... 19
Issue F: Continue to improve institutional libraries to support academic programs. (CFR 3.5) ........................................................................................................................................ 20
Issue G: Create financial policies for the institution’s cash balances while preserving sufficient levels of institutional liquidity. (CFR 3.4) ........................................................................................................... 21
Issue H: Ensure consistency between the corporate bylaws and the Board Governance Manual regarding the selection and approval of the president. (CFR 3.9) ............................................................................ 23

SECTION III – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .......... 23
SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of Institution, Accreditation History, and Visit

New York Film Academy (NYFA), a for-profit institution of higher education, was founded in New York City in 1992 by a film producer, whose son is now the sole owner. NYFA’s mission is to “[propagate] visual literacy and visual storytelling through hands-on intensive learning. It seeks to make visual storytelling education accessible to the most diverse, international, and broadest possible spectrum of students, and to hone the skills of future professionals so that they may one day serve the visual storytelling arts as industry leaders.”

The institution operates campuses in Los Angeles, New York City, Miami Beach, and Australia and offers conservatory programs and workshops around the world, including in Italy, France, China, and Russia, and at Harvard University. NYFA currently offers both short non-degree programs of various lengths (one to 12 weeks long) and one- and two-year non-degree programs, and degree programs including: associate of fine arts (AFA), bachelor of fine arts (BFA), bachelor of arts (BA), master of fine arts (MFA), and master of arts (MA). Programs are offered in a variety of acting, film and theater arts-related areas, as well as photography, graphic design, and game design. All programs are offered on site. In AY 2019-20, NYFA enrolled 2,363 students in one-year or longer programs at its U.S. campuses. Of these, 29% were in non-degree programs of one or two years, 49% in undergraduate associate’s or bachelor’s degree programs, and 22% in master’s degree programs. Los Angeles is the largest campus with about 75% of the students. International students have made up an average of 55% of U.S. enrollment over the past six years. There were 131 students at the Australia campus in 2020.

In 2006, NYFA was accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), an institutional accreditor recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and with the granting of this accreditation students became eligible for federal financial aid. The Los
Angeles campus is the institution’s main campus, and other locations are designated as branch campuses by the U.S. Department of Education. NYFA was grantedWSCUC eligibility in 2016, Candidacy in 2018 after a Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 (SAV1), and Initial Accreditation in spring 2019 after a SAV2. One new MFA program was proposed and approved by WSCUC during the Candidacy period. The Commission Action Letter granting initial accreditation scheduled a Special Visit (SV) to address eight recommendations related to: 1) English language proficiency standards and support for international students; 2) recruitment and admissions structures and practices; 3) stakeholder communication; 4) faculty workload, compensation, and performance evaluation; 5) physical space for confidential meetings; 6) library resources; 7) financial policies for institutional cash balances; and 8) alignment of board of directors’ documents.

In response to the pandemic, NYFA quickly moved to deliver its programs remotely via Zoom in spring 2020 and is currently operating in hybrid models. A full return to campus is planned for fall 2021 although NYFA continues to explore opportunities for hybrid program delivery as faculty and academic administrators have found innovative solutions to delivering visual and performance arts curriculum and learning experiences through technology. NYFA’s enrollment in one-year or longer programs declined 16% in 2020 from the prior year due to restrictions on international student enrollment. In response, the institution, like many higher education institutions, made painful decisions to furlough or lay off staff. Course schedules were necessarily consolidated and reduced due to lower enrollments, resulting in reductions in faculty course teaching loads and pay. Staff and administrators with salaries $75,000 or above took graduated salary reductions from 10% to 30%, and some major categories of expenses, such as travel, were reduced. Budget assumptions for 2021 include a 6% enrollment decline from 2019
and continued management of expenses to contain an operational deficit. A return to profitability is projected by 2022.

B. Description of Team’s Review Process

The team reviewed contextual and accreditation history reports provided by WSCUC including the Key Indicators Report. NYFA submitted an institutional report with a series of appendices that addressed each area of review for the SV. The team reviewed the submitted documents and held two meetings, on February 24, 2021 and March 18, 2021, to discuss the general direction of the visit and the schedule and to review the supplemental materials provided by NYFA in response to the team’s request.

Prior to the visit, the team chair met with the president, and one team member met with NYFA’s financial auditor. During the visit, the team conducted 19 meetings with members of the NYFA community via Zoom including the president, owner, chair of the board of directors, senior leadership, faculty senate, academic and department leaders. Open meetings were held with faculty, staff, and international students. The team also reviewed input to the confidential email account established by WSCUC.

The team was able to make judgments about NYFA’s progress in all eight areas of focus for this SV based on the evidence provided by NYFA and the team’s interviews with institutional representatives. In addition, the team explored the financial status of NYFA, which had changed since the institution’s last interaction with WSCUC as a result of the pandemic.

C. Institution’s Special Visit Report: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence

NYFA’s institutional report was well organized around the eight areas of the visit and provided summary information on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the institution. The
report was developed by relevant administrators and departments from across the institution under the leadership of the NYFA WSCUC Steering Committee.

The SV took place two years after the SAV2. Since that time, at least one action had been taken in response to every Commission recommendation and in some cases several actions had been taken to respond to a recommendation. For some issues, there was limited detail or analysis of results or plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions, in part because some longer-term actions were recently implemented, and outcomes were not yet available. NYFA was fully responsive to all team requests for supplemental materials and data during the process.

SECTION II – TEAMS’S EVALUATION OF ISSUES UNDER THE STANDARDS

Issue A: Examine and modify English language proficiency standards and support services to enable admitted students to be successful in their chosen programs and consistently meet student learning outcomes. (CFRs 1.6, 1.7, 2.6, 2.13)

During its visit to NYFA in November 2017, the SAV1 team identified challenges relating to international students’ level of English language proficiency and recommended that NYFA improve language support to non-native-English-speaking students, particularly since NYFA enrolls a high percentage of international students. NYFA offered tutoring through the Writing Center and began requiring that writing tutors hold Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) certification. NYFA’s Council on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) also began raising awareness of and appreciation for cultural and international differences and expectations.

During its visit to NYFA in March 2019, the SAV2 team found the issues related to international students’ low English language proficiency persisting and recommended that
NYFA continue to address these issues by re-examining the English proficiency standards and support services for non-native-English-speaking students.

Responding to the Commission’s initial accreditation action letter, NYFA developed several new initiatives to improve non-native-English-speaking students’ English proficiency, as described in its institutional report submitted to support the spring 2021 SV (SV IR), including: 1) the International Pathway Program, and 2) various institutional assessments, including analysis of student learning outcomes and use of National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data.

**International Pathway Program**

In fall 2020, NYFA launched a new two-semester postsecondary program called International Pathway Program (IPP) to support international students whose English proficiency levels are not high enough to be admitted to degree programs. In this English-intensive international pathway track for non-native-speaker students, English as a second language (ESL) courses, including academic reading, writing, and listening, are offered concurrently with courses in the student’s major. As described by the institution and in interviews with the team, administrators, faculty, and students were all supportive of the program which had been under development for several years and pleased that the program is now being offered as an alternative to students.

IPP was intended to be an on-campus program offered at NYFA’s Los Angeles campus, but due to COVID-19, it began via remote delivery in AY 2020-2021. The program enrolled nine students in fall 2020—six master’s degree-seeing students and three bachelor’s degree-seeing students. Enrollment, initially expected to be much higher, was likely suppressed due to COVID-19. The graduate level IPP students are taking all classes together taught by four instructors (ESL
and non-ESL), and the undergraduate level IPP students are taking all classes together taught by three instructors (ESL and non-ESL). There are three ESL instructors who teach in the IPP—two full-time and one part-time, all with a master’s degree in TESOL or in a related field with a concentration in TESOL. The IPP is well-staffed, especially due to low enrollment this year, with highly qualified and dedicated faculty with appropriate background, experience, and expertise.

The admission requirements for IPP are as follows:

**Bachelor’s Degree**
- IELTS: 4.5 (out of 9), TOEFL: 58 (out of 120), Duolingo: 85 (out of 160)

**Master’s Degree**
- IELTS: 5.0 (out of 9), TOEFL: 64 (out of 120), Duolingo: 90 (out of 160)

First, the proficiency exam option scores do not appear to be fully comparable, e.g., the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score 58 should be 5.5 on the International English Language Test (IELTS), not 4.5, and the TOEFL 64 should be 6.0 on IELTS, not 5.0.1 Similarly, TOEFL and IELTS scores required for admission to undergraduate degree programs are not aligned. The team strongly encourages NYFA to re-examine the equivalency between the required TOEFL and IELTS scores. (CFR 1.6)

Second, and more importantly, the team, which has expertise in this field, is concerned that the language proficiency scores required for admission to IPP are low. The team learned that those thresholds were set based on the scores required for admission to the degree programs, which the team also found low. This concern is discussed further below and in Issue B.

---

1 See [https://www.ets.org/toefl/score-users/scores-admissions/compare/](https://www.ets.org/toefl/score-users/scores-admissions/compare/)
While not currently having a level of English proficiency that would make them admissible to a degree program, IPP students take some degree (or content) courses prior to degree program matriculation. The content courses that are tailored to their needs and proficiency levels taught by regular (non-ESL) instructors, and credits earned from such content courses are transferrable to the degree program should students continue. While this type of hybrid model greatly increases the level of authenticity regarding content, such an ESL model involving degree level credit requires well-planned integration as well as both buy-in and excellent collaboration between ESL instructors and select faculty. Moreover, this model is normally offered in limited scope, and student participants often have much higher English ability than NYFA’s IPP students. The team recommends that NYFA immediately evaluate the English proficiency levels required for admission to IPP and urges NYFA to examine the practice of combining ESL coursework with major discipline courses to determine whether these aspects of the program are effective and sustainable. (CFR 2.2)

The institutional report states that to matriculate into a NYFA degree program, “all Pathway students must successfully pass all developmental ESL courses and must complete the Pathway Program with a cumulative grade point average in all transferable major discipline and Liberal Arts and Sciences courses equal to the GPA requirements of their intended NYFA degree programs (for undergraduate: 2.0 GPA; for graduate: 3.0 GPA)” (page 9). There are no other evaluation criteria for admission to (or transition into) the target degree program. The team suggests that NYFA consider administering a language proficiency exam (such as TOEFL) to ensure students completing the IPP have fulfilled the language proficiency requirement to be admitted to their target degree programs. Such data would be useful as NYFA evaluates the effectiveness of IPP, e.g., when conducting pre- and post-program evaluations of student achievement. The team commends NYFA for supporting the development and implementation of
IPP and recommends that it continue to do so while moving forward with an assessment of the program as data are collected. (CFR 2.2)

Analysis of Learning Outcomes Assessment

NYFA has attended to international students’ academic performance. Disaggregation and analysis of learning outcomes assessment data found that international students score well in visual/conceptual skills, but less so in verbal and written communication. The most recent NYFA Oral Communication and Written Communication Assessment Reports both reported that non-native-English-speaking students “are not equipped with the academic language skills that are needed to succeed throughout their BFA programs” (page 13, Oral Communication Assessment Report). The Acting for Film Visual Literacy Assessment 2019-2020 Report noted that “international and non-English speaking students achieved relatively lower scores on written assessments than domestic and English-speaking students,” while “international students achieved either equal or higher scores for both BFA and MFA for all artifacts as well as the overall scores” (page 10, SV IR). As reported in assessment reports and confirmed in discussions during the remote review, English proficiency levels are a concern to faculty and academic administrators. Despite such findings, the language proficiency entrance requirements for degree programs have not been modified.

Based on these assessment results, the institutional report describes that “Departments have learned how to devise better ways of working with international students” (page 12, SV IR). As one solution, the Los Angeles Acting program “added a lookbook portion and visual analysis to the thesis requirements to allow students to express their concepts in visual form rather than written form, allowing English language learners another way of expressing their visual concepts without the English language acting as a barrier” (page 12, SV IR). The team
appreciates this creative solution but notes that it does not directly address the issue of students with low English proficiency. The team commends NYFA for disaggregating assessment data to better understand the academic performance of non-native English speakers. The team recommends that NYFA continue to pay close attention to assessment results, examine and modify English language proficiency standards, and improve its admission and placement practices for both degree programs and IPP. (CFRs 2.2, 2.10, 4.1, 4.3)

NYFA has also used assessment data such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data and course evaluation data in order to assess the institutional support for international students. For instance, NSSE results were used to improve student services including the Writing Center, which provides writing support services to students through tutoring and consultation on writing techniques and grammar. The Writing Center is well-staffed with highly qualified and dedicated tutors with appropriate backgrounds and experience and serves both domestic and international students, although it is utilized more frequently by the international students. International students interviewed praised and appreciated the service provided by the Writing Center. The team commends NYFA for the ongoing support of the Writing Center and suggests that NYFA continue to provide resources necessary to make the Center’s operation even more successful, especially efforts to assist international student. (CFRs 2.13, 4.3)

**Issue B: Continue to evaluate and improve recruitment and admissions structures and practices to ensure new student enrollment goals are attained with students capable of completing their chosen programs. (CFRs 1.7, 3.7)**

Based on the SAV2 team’s findings, WSCUC recommended that NYFA continue to evaluate and improve recruitment and admissions structures and practices to ensure new student
enrollment goals are attained with students capable of completing their chosen programs.

Responding to this recommendation, NYFA developed several initiatives to improve recruitment and admissions, including: more online outreach; multiple avenues of recruitment to strengthen the pool; use of College Board data for recruitment; institutional aid (need-based and merit awards), particularly, new DEI grants and talent-based grants; improved website; digital application process; and stronger adherence to GPA requirements and TOEFL scores. Although many of the initiatives are still at the early stage of implementation, and it may still be too early to see results, the team appreciates NYFA’s efforts to improve recruitment and admission practices.

Both retention and 150% graduation rates have fluctuated over the years: between 65% and 84% for the international student retention rate, between 66% and 81% for the domestic student retention rate, between 61% and 78% for the international student graduation rate, and between 48% and 63% for the domestic graduation rate. International and domestic students have achieved comparable retention and graduation rates with international students’ rates being slightly higher than their domestic counterparts’ in some years. As discussed in Issue A, analyses of assessment data on student learning outcomes revealed that international students (non-native English speakers) have relatively lower achievement of core competencies in written and oral communication. Information from interviews and confidential e-mails indicated that faculty have continuing concerns about international students with low English proficiency. Concerns fall into two categories: 1) students’ difficulties in being successful in the academic environment, e.g., difficulties understanding, communicating, or functioning in class, or needing to repeat the class, and 2) impact on the level of instruction, group work, faculty ability to achieve class outcomes, and the effectiveness of the course. These findings contribute to the team’s concern that the minimum English proficiency levels required for admission to degree programs are low.
Minimum English proficiency requirements for colleges and universities vary widely—some schools require 100+ TOEFL iBT [internet-based test] scores (especially for graduate programs), whereas some undergraduate programs may require scores in the 80s or in the upper 70s. The team recommends that NYFA reevaluate its English proficiency requirements for both IPP and degree programs using benchmark data, institutional assessment data and analyses, and input from faculty, especially those with TESOL backgrounds. The team also suggests that minimum scores for each of the four proficiency skills (writing, reading, speaking, and listening) be established for each degree level in addition to the total minimum score, e.g., for a total of 80+, a minimum score of 20 may be required for each skill. (CFRs 1.7, 2.2, 2.10, 3.7, 4.1, 4.3)

Admission data from the past six years indicate that the average acceptance rate of international applicants has been 92%, and that of domestic 95%. Through interviews and confidential e-mails, faculty overwhelmingly expressed their desire for more selective admissions, not only for international admissions but also for domestic. NYFA must find the balance between its mission and appropriate admission standards and recruitment practices. The team recommends that NYFA continue to make admission practices more strategic and continue to strengthen admission standards to ensure that admitted students are capable of successfully completing their chosen programs. The team also recommends that NYFA continue to ensure that faculty exercise effective academic leadership by strengthening faculty input and involvement into admission standards and decision-making process, not only for evaluation of portfolios but also for admission decisions in general and suggests engaging those with TESOL backgrounds in international admissions. (CFRs 1.7, 2.2, 3.7)

Upon examination of the admission data for admitted international applicants from the past six years, the team has found that a significant amount of information is missing especially relating to how applicants’ English proficiency was evaluated. In the past, scores from different
tests such as TOEFL (PBT [paper-based test] and iBT [internet-based test]), IELTS, Duolingo, Accuplacer, Whiteplacer, SAT, ACT, etc. have been used to evaluate applicants’ English proficiency. As explained by the institution, “NYFA has historically not had very standardized or adhered-to data practices. There are several types of data inconsistencies as a result.” NYFA has been working to standardize and unify data capture and management and compliance with institutional practices across all departments. It is working to resolve these issues related to admission data and data management in general with the help of the vice president of institutional research and effectiveness, who has a leadership role in multiple data and assessment initiatives. NYFA has also recently launched a new digital application portal for prospective students and expects this portal to capture all data as standardized fields with standardized values. NYFA is currently searching for VP for Enrollment Services to achieve more coordination among the three campuses. The team commends these initiatives and urges that their progress be monitored closely and assessed for further improvement. (CFRs 4.1, 4.2. 4.3)

**Issue C: Improve communication strategies, and after stakeholders have had the opportunity to provide appropriate input into decisions, ensure that important matters are shared with the community in a timely manner. (CFR 1.7, 3.6, 3.7)**

NYFA has made several institutional efforts to address this recommendation. Specific actions described by the institutional report included: 1) general increased cohesion and integration across the university through meetings, councils, committees, and task forces, including the university’s DEI Council and the CETL; 2) the addition of a new faculty portal named the Hub; and 3) improvements in various communication avenues, including the use of surveys, focus groups, and town halls, and collaboration on issues with the faculty senate.
The team reviewed an extensive selection of university communications on issues including the pandemic, curricular review, changes to scheduling and faculty pay, course evaluations, monthly staff meetings, general notices. The staff meetings were developed specifically to improve communication across NYFA. The team also reviewed minutes from the faculty senate meetings including one inter-campus senate meeting. Administrators across all campuses (the team did not interact with participants from Australia) commented on the improved integration of the community including through daily (now weekly) Campus and Cross-Campus COVID Committee meetings to address critical academic and operational responses.

The DEI Council and CETL developed systemwide trainings to improve institutional equity and inclusion climate, “calling in” rather than “calling out” members of the community. The CETL is also a community-building effort to promote collaboration and improve faculty professional development and adaption to Zoom through workshops and events. Members of the community voiced widespread support for these important initiatives and the team commends the work of the DEI and teaching excellence institutional efforts. The Hub is a relatively new avenue of communication to support faculty in completing tasks and finding university information and is a work in progress.

Administrators have sought input from academic departments or faculty in surveys or via the faculty senate on changes such as the revised course evaluation and evaluating the institution’s future direction for teaching/learning modality, and salary structure. Feedback during the visit indicated that in both the administrative and academic areas, some departments are functioning and communicating well while others have challenges. Faculty reported some improvements in inclusive decision-making on the academic side, but ongoing difficulties on the administrative side. Faculty also reported that communication and problem resolution processes
between faculty and administration can be unclear, ineffective and lack accountability and transparency. Most areas of faculty concern fall into human resources areas, e.g., compensation schedules, transparency and equity of administrative and teaching workload expectations, and transparency and accountability in the faculty evaluations process. Others relate to course scheduling. The pandemic has created additional demands on all members of the NYFA community, such as the need for faculty to re-conceptualize courses to engage students during remote learning, exacerbating existing conditions.

The faculty senate is attempting to expand faculty representation on the senate by department and focus on an academic- and faculty-focused agenda, such as redevelopment of course evaluations, student co-curricular activities, and the academic honesty policy. However, the lack of effective problem-solving mechanisms results in the faculty senate remaining an avenue through which faculty try to resolve issues. The team recommends that NYFA continue to ensure that faculty exercise effective academic leadership by supporting the development of the faculty senate as a partner in academic decision-making and providing clear and accountable processes for resolving faculty problems and issues in a timely and effective manner. The team also recommends that the institution improve clarity about responsibilities for academic decision-making including at what points faculty input is gathered and integrated, and about institutional avenues of communication about policies and decisions. (CFRs 2.4, 3.10)

Due in part to necessary changes of course delivery resulting from response to the pandemic, improvements in institutional communication efforts have not yet been evaluated. The team recommends that NYFA develop assessment processes to collect data on institutional/departmental operations, communications, and decision-making; evaluate the effectiveness of departments and/or key personnel; and use the results for improvement. These assessments could
take any form, but examples are employee engagement or climate surveys, 360-degree performance tools, or department effectiveness surveys. (CFRs 1.7, 3.6, 3.7, 4.1)

**Issue D: Continue to address issues of faculty workload, compensation, and performance evaluation. (CFR 2.9, 3.1, 3.2)**

Based on the SAV2 team’s findings, WSCUC recommended that NYFA continue efforts to address issues of faculty workload, compensation, and performance. In 2019, NYFA held a series of town hall meetings with faculty and the faculty senate to discuss these issues. As a result, the institution adopted two changes. As described in the institutional report, a new system was developed in which chairs together with faculty determined the number of preparation and grading hours for each specific course, replacing the broader categories of lecture or studio courses previously used. Outcomes of this effort were more standardized pay scales based on individual courses and course requirements (e.g., preparation, grading) combined with a reduction to the full-time workload designation from seven-to-nine courses per trimester to six, which is designated as 270 hours of service.

A second effort was a change to hire new full-time faculty on a contract basis rather than the prior salary structure. The goals for this change in contracting for services were to increase: 1) pay transparency as faculty can see how they are paid for each class they teach, and 2) increase pay equity since this process could resolve the issue of salaried faculty adding additional courses without extra pay. One faculty benefit was eliminated under this new pay structure. Communications about this change and course payment calculations by course were reviewed by the team, but this change, and the effect of this change, did not appear to have been clearly communicated or fully understood by the faculty.
While the reduction in courses per trimester was an important change, the expectation of six courses per term remains a significant teaching load and apparently can result in faculty teaching long hours in one day, depending on the schedule. Some of the teaching schedules described did not seem sustainable to the team. The pandemic was creating additional pressure since faculty identified that students needed additional help and support for learning in the remote format.

Concerns raised by faculty about the new system for modifying faculty workload and compensation include: 1) underestimation of actual number of hours required for preparation and grading; 2) unresolved errors in posted and authorized credit hours data used to calculate payment assigned to courses; and 3) lack of transparency and consistency for salary adjustment based on assuming administrative responsibilities or salaried faculty taking on an additional course load.

A new course evaluation instrument has been developed in Los Angeles to focus more on the course than the faculty member, and the faculty senate had been involved in that effort. Work was ongoing to align the evaluation form across the three U.S. campuses. Both the course evaluation results, which can now be monitored and used more easily in new dashboards developed by the institutional research department, and course observations are used as input to the faculty evaluation process. The faculty evaluation process was also reported to be unclear, with some faculty reporting that they received no feedback, final letter, or decision resulting from the annual review process.

As noted earlier, both the CETL and DEI Council were working to provide a variety of professional development opportunities for faculty related to using Zoom, distance learning strategies and tools, engaging non-native-English-speaking students, and inclusive teaching practices with limited resources.
The team recommends that NYFA continue to evaluate faculty workload to determine whether it is appropriate and sustainable and improve transparency and communication about compensation, benefits, pay benefits for faculty. The team also strongly encourages NYFA to improve the performance evaluation processes for faculty and continue to provide and strengthen faculty professional development opportunities and support. (CFR 2.9, 3.1, 3.2)

**Issue E: Provide physical space for the confidential interviewing, tutoring, and advising of prospective and current students. (CFR 3.5)**

NYFA addressed the confidential space recommendation in four ways. Immediately after the SAV2, the institution created additional confidential meeting space by converting private office and classroom space to confidential meeting space and creating a booking system for faculty and staff to schedule rooms to meet with students. It has also moved to a more standardized class schedule that aligns breaks between classes to provide easy opportunities for faculty to meet with students after class. The registrar’s department focused on the digitization of records and making forms and information available electronically, reducing the need for students to visit with the registrar in person to pick up or turn in paper forms, allowing office space to be used for students requesting advising or consultation sessions that could be held without interruption. When NYFA moved to remote operations due to the pandemic, student meetings with faculty or staff shifted to Zoom, which were easier to schedule and attend for both students and faculty. The institution is working on a return-to-campus plan, which may incorporate more remote work and some hybrid classwork, freeing additional space on campus for confidential meetings. Zoom meetings, which have been effective and efficient, are anticipated to be continued going forward. Evidence indicates this issue has been resolved. (CFR 3.5)
Issue F: Continue to improve institutional libraries to support academic programs. (CFR 3.5)

In response to the recommendation fromWSCUC to improve institutional libraries, the institution has added additional library resources, both digital and physical. The library added JSTOR Arts and Sciences digital resources, EBSCO open-source books, and additional physical resources: DVDs were increased by 13.1%; screenplays by 1.3%; plays by 9.1%; and books by 6.1%. Collection development has included expanding the number of films by African American, women, and LGTBQ+ filmmakers. The library has also begun a metadata improvement project in the library catalog, including expanding metadata across the film collection to improve searchability and cross-referencing ability.

No additional physical space was added since the SAV2 as the pandemic pushed most instruction to remote modality or off-site; space during the pandemic has not been a pressing issue.

Results from a student information literacy assessment indicated that the one to one-and-one-half hour information literacy introduction scheduled at orientation was not sufficient to develop the necessary level of student information literacy. In response, a new, thoughtfully developed library guide was created to help students navigate the online digital resources and research methods. After further discussion, a new library website was developed; the site will host “how to” videos, explaining how to navigate the online databases and conduct research. These additional digital instructional resources to support students’ research and information literacy needs are in final stages of development.
Library staffing was reduced as part of institutional cost-cutting in the pandemic, leaving only two full-time librarians at the Los Angeles campus, and no librarian staffing the two other campuses. The following table summarizes library staffing before and after the pandemic began:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staffing Levels</th>
<th>Pre-Pandemic</th>
<th>Pandemic</th>
<th>Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LA Campus</strong></td>
<td>2 Full-time; 3 part-time</td>
<td>2 Full-time (one on family leave)</td>
<td>Minus 3 part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South Beach Campus</strong></td>
<td>1 Full-time</td>
<td>No staff</td>
<td>Minus one full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New York Campus</strong></td>
<td>1 Part-time</td>
<td>No staff</td>
<td>Minus one part-time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The team recommends that NYFA conduct an analysis of library resources to identify and ensure appropriate levels of resources for each of its academic programs and campus locations. The need for additional library staff should be considered, particularly to support student learning in information literacy and student needs for service at all campuses post pandemic. (CFRs 3.3, 3.5)

A library budget established after the SAV2 has been discontinued due to the student decline precipitated by COVID-19. The team suggests that a separate library budget be reinstated as soon as practicable. (CFR 3.7)

**Issue G: Create financial policies for the institution’s cash balances while preserving sufficient levels of institutional liquidity. (CFR 3.4)**

In response to this recommendation from WSCUC, the NYFA board of directors adopted a financial sustainability plan that limits the amount of cash that can be transferred to the owner until the primary reserve ratio attains a level of 0.4, the minimum level recommended by KPMG. In addition, the institution adopted an Investment Policy that governs the management of cash and other institutional funds. The team considered the institution’s actions as fully
meeting the goal of this recommendation. In the future, NYFA may want to consider developing a framework for what happens after it meets the 0.4 primary reserve ratio goal. (CFR 3.4)

Additional Issue: Financial Status of NYFA. While not a specific focus for this SV, the team learned as part of this remote review, that the fragile financial situation of NYFA has further changed since its last interaction with WSCUC, due to the impact of the pandemic. For the fiscal year ending December 31, 2020, NYFA experienced a sizeable loss from operations and from one-time extraordinary write-offs recognizing the cessation of operations in various locations. The institution reacted quickly to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a 29% decrease in revenues. As a result of the year’s loss, the primary reserve ratio declined from 0.25 at the end of 2019 to 0.21 at the end of 2020. The institution anticipates a loss in 2021, which will further erode resources. The institution should be commended for its work to diversify revenue streams as non-tuition revenues nearly doubled from 2019 to 2020. Cash actually increased from 2019 to 2020 largely through deferring expenses for as many as 3 or 4 years. Were there to be an additional loss in 2022, the institution could potentially need infusion of additional capital and the owner assured the team that a cash infusion would be made should it become necessary.

The institution is highly tuition-dependent, with tuition revenue comprising 99% of revenue in 2019, and 98% in 2020. The institution has been planning strategically and moving forward quickly with enrollment diversification and growth initiatives, such as the development of online programs and international collaborations that would grow enrollments and revenue. Substantive change proposals have already been submitted to WSCUC for review. The institution is improving its use of AI and other technologies to make recruitment efforts both more efficient and more effective; improving outreach to domestic students; and anticipating enrollment growth at the New York campus, which lacked until relatively recently the New York
State approvals required to offer degree programs. The team recommends that the institution continue: 1) managing its revenues and expenses to achieve a balanced budget by FY 2022, and 2) building reserves to achieve a 0.4 primary reserve ratio to improve the financial strength of the institution and ensure long-term financial sustainability. The team recognizes the inherent difficulty in making necessary reductions in expenses to ensure financial sustainability while preserving sufficient resources to support academic programs. The institution should also continue to diversify its revenue streams to become less dependent upon tuition. (CFR 3.4)

**Issue H: Ensure consistency between the corporate bylaws and the Board Governance Manual regarding the selection and approval of the president. (CFR 3.9)**

By the time the WSCUC Commission met to consider initial accreditation for NYFA after the SAV2, the NYFA board of directors had approved a change in the board Bylaws which brought the wording of the Governance Policy Manual and the Bylaws into alignment. Both now clearly state that the board of directors approves the selection of the president. The team considers this action to have fully met the recommendation of the WSCUC Commission. (CFR 3.9)

**SECTION III – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The SV team appreciated NYFA’s responsiveness to requests for additional data and documents, and the openness and candor exhibited by members of the institution during interviews. The visit was well-organized and ran smoothly, and the team was able to gain sufficient information about the key issues at the institution.
Commendations

NYFA is commended for:

1. Rapidly responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by quickly changing the modality of instruction, implementing technology-based solutions to provide effective learning experiences in “hands-on” visual and performing arts courses, and reducing expenses.

2. Implementing several initiatives to address the international students’ English language proficiency and support issues, particularly for the launch of the International Pathway Program (IPP) for international students whose English proficiency levels are not high enough to be admitted to degree programs.

3. Disaggregating assessment data to better understand the academic performance of international students.

4. Committing to carry out institution-wide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives that represent the institution’s strongly-held values and goals.

Recommendations

The team recommends that NYFA:

1. Strengthen the institution’s financial position by strategically increasing enrollment, diversifying revenue streams, controlling expenses, and building financial reserves to create net asset increases to achieve at least a 0.4 primary reserve ratio. (CFRs 3.4, 4.7)

2. Accelerate efforts to examine and modify English language proficiency standards and admission requirements for degree programs and the International Pathway Program (IPP) using benchmark data, institutional assessment data and analyses, and input from faculty, especially those with TESOL backgrounds. (CFRs 2.2, 2.10, 4.1, 4.3)

3. Continue to strengthen admission standards to ensure that admitted students are capable of completing their chosen programs. (CFRs 1.7, 2.2, 3.7)
4. Ensure that faculty exercise effective academic leadership. (CFRs 2.4, 3.10)

5. Assess and demonstrate the effectiveness of its efforts to increase inclusive discussions with stakeholders across the campuses and provide avenues for faculty input and response, so that decision-making processes are transparent, and the results are communicated clearly. (CFRs 1.7, 3.6, 3.7, 4.1)

6. Assess the current faculty workload to determine if it is appropriate and sustainable, and improve transparency and communication about compensation, pay, and benefits for faculty. (CFRs 2.9, 3.1, 3.2)

7. Ensure library and literacy needs at all locations are met by conducting analyses of resources required for the academic programs and the staffing and resources necessary for each campus. (CFR 3.5)