



## **SPECIAL VISIT REPORT**

United States University  
7675 Mission Valley Road  
San Diego, CA 92108  
[www.usuniversity.edu](http://www.usuniversity.edu)

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Submitted by Dr. Steven Stargardter, President, Accreditation Liaison Officer

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## **1. Nature of the Institutional Context and Major Changes Since the Last WSCUC Visit and Statement on Report Preparation**

### **Primary Evidence**

- March 4, 2019 Action Letter (Web Link)
- WSCUC Special Visit Steering Committee Composition and Initial Minutes (Exhibit Link)
- WSCUC Special Visit Report Steering Committee Sample Minutes (Exhibit Link)

The purpose of this United States University (USU) Special Visit Report is to respond to the three issues raised by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) in the Action Letter dated March 4, 2019: <https://www.usuniversity.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/March-2019-WSCUC-Action-Letter.pdf>

1. Evaluate and set realistic enrollment targets based on market analysis and resource allocations necessary to sustain program quality. (CFR 3.4)
2. Closely monitor financial performance relative to plan to ensure that realistic budgets based on accurate estimates of enrollment are developed. (CFR 3.4)
3. Optimize the implementation of the Service Level Agreement through regular assessment, including all stakeholders, of the efficacy and quality of services provided. (CFRs 2.13, 3.5)

Section 1 provides the Visiting Team with information about USU in addition to a summary of the major changes that have occurred since the last WSCUC Special Visit on November 28-30, 2018. Section 2 provides the readers with background as to how this Report was prepared. Section 3 contains direct responses to the three issues raised in the most recent Action Letter while Section 4 previews USU's preparation for the next Accreditation Visit. Brief concluding remarks comprise Section 5. A list of acronyms, tables, and exhibits has been compiled in Section 6 to facilitate the readability of this report.

The preparation of this report was facilitated by the President and ALO, Dr. Steven Stargardter; the Provost, Dr. Scott Burrus; and the Associate Provost, Dr. Elizabeth Archer. Input was provided by the Special Visit Report Steering Committee and by members of the USU community ([WSCUC Special Visit Steering Committee Composition and Initial Minutes](#); [WSCUC Special Visit Report Steering Committee Sample Minutes](#)).

All of us look forward to welcoming the Visiting Team to campus to discuss the institutional response to the 2019 Action Letter and the manner in which the university is evolving to serve a growing and vibrant student body.

### **1.1 Background**

#### **Primary Evidence**

- 2018-2019 Graduate Survey: Currently Employed (Exhibit Link)
- 2018-2019 Graduate Survey: Usefulness of Education (Exhibit Link)
- 2018 Population Rollover Reports (Exhibit Link)

- 2019 Population Rollover Reports (Exhibit Link)
- 2019 December BOT P&L (Exhibit Room)
- Comparative Tuition Rates for MSN-FNP to Benchmarked Institutions (Table 1)

USU is a student-centric, affordability-focused institution committed to its mission to provide educational opportunities to underserved groups. Classes are taught primarily online; however, nursing and business students participate in immersion learning and weekend MBA courses on campus, respectively. The university offers programs in education, business, information technology, health sciences, and nursing, wherein faculty aim to integrate theory and practice into interactive learning experiences. Alumni responding to a recent (2018-19) survey confirmed the relevance of the curriculum, with 83% of the respondents (N=155) indicating that the education they received at USU was useful in obtaining a job in their chosen field and 91% reporting current employment ([2018-2019 Graduate Survey: Currently Employed](#); [2018-2019 Graduate Survey: Usefulness of Education](#)).

The December 1, 2017 change in ownership to Aspen Group, Inc. (AGI) catalyzed increased enrollment and financial growth with a focus on enrolling students in the Master of Science in Nursing-Family Nurse Practitioner (MSN-FNP) program. Since the 2018 Special Visit, the university’s total active student body grew year-over-year from 634 on December 31, 2018 to 1,384 by December 10, 2019. During the same timeframe, USU’s MSN-FNP active student body grew from 524 to 1192 students ([2018 Population Rollover Report](#); [2019 Population Rollover Report](#)). This increased student population resulted in positive net income during the university’s most recent reporting quarter (**Exhibit Room: 2019 December BOT P&L**).

USU distinguishes itself by providing accessible education at affordable tuition rates. In terms of affordability, Table 1. Comparative Tuition Rates for MSN-FNP to Benchmarked Institutions demonstrates that USU’s largest program (MSN-FNP) is materially less expensive for students.

Table 1. Comparative Tuition Rates for MSN-FNP to Benchmarked Institutions

School	Cost/credit	Total Cost
United States University	\$465/credit	\$26,650.00
Chamberlain University	\$665/credit	\$39,000.00
Grand Canyon University	\$690/credit	\$42,000.00
Samuel Merritt University	\$1,353/unit	\$66,297.00
University of Phoenix	\$665/credit	\$39,000.00
Walden University	\$680/credit	\$39,000.00
West Coast University	\$635/\$785/credit	\$44,000.00

The affordability of USU’s degree programs allows students to complete their degree without incurring large student loan debt. In addition, USU offers an innovative approach to paying for a degree, a monthly payment plan (MPP), which has proven popular with students. The number of USU students paying tuition and fees through the MPP grew to a total of 970, representing 66% of USU’s total active student body, in the most recent reporting quarter.

## 1.2 Mission

### Primary Evidence

- USU About page (Web Link)
- USU Programs page (Web Link)
- Approved Programs List (Exhibit Room)

The university remains unwavering in its commitment to its mission: the provision of *professional and personal educational opportunities, with a special outreach to underserved groups. Through campus and online programs, the university offers affordable, relevant and accessible undergraduate and graduate degree programs and certificates in a supportive student-centered learning environment* (<https://www.usuniversity.edu/about/>). The institution's core values remain affordability, quality, integrity, diversity, inclusiveness, and life-long learning.

Programs currently offered (<https://www.usuniversity.edu/colleges/programs/>) include:

- Bachelor of Arts in Management (BAM)
- Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences (BSHS)
- Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT) \*\*
- Master of Arts in Education (MAEd)
- Master of Business Administration (MBA)
- Master of Science in Nursing (concentrations: Family Nurse Practitioner, Health Care Leadership, and Nurse Educator) (MSN)
- Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN-BSN)

\*\* Officially approved by the WASC Senior Commission in a letter dated February 22, 2019; approved by Department of Education for financial aid eligibility on September 30, 2019.

A full list of additional programs, some of which are currently in hiatus due to a combination of previously mandated gainful employment regulations and enrollment challenges for on-site programs, will be available to the Visiting Team in the Exhibit Room (**Exhibit Room: Approved Programs List**).

### 1.3 History

#### Primary Evidence:

- December 2019 BOT Persistence, Retention, Graduation Report (Exhibit Link)
- Fall 2019 Student Satisfaction Survey: Overall Education Experience (Preliminary Findings) (Exhibit Link)
- Fall 2019 Student Satisfaction Survey Results (Exhibit Room)
- List of State Authorizations Approvals (Exhibit Link)
- List of State Boards of Nursing Approvals (Exhibit Link)

United States University began its institutional journey in 1997 as InterAmerican College (IAC) in National City, CA. Its initial focus was the provision of educational opportunities to working adults, Latinx, and educated immigrants to increase bilingual capacity in education and healthcare in Southern California.

In 2009, IAC received initial accreditation from WSCUC, which also approved a structural change from nonprofit to for-profit status. This change was formally implemented in 2010 when the school was renamed United States University. A Special Visit conducted in April 2013, however, determined that USU was out of compliance with the standards referenced in the *2013 Handbook of Accreditation*. As a result, WSCUC placed the institution on probation in an Action Letter dated July 10, 2013. The work the USU community undertook to correct the deficiencies cited by the 2013 Visiting Team was recognized by WSCUC in an Action Letter dated June 24, 2015, when the Commission removed the probationary status and reaffirmed accreditation for seven years, concurrently issuing a Notice of Concern.

In 2017, USU received approval for a structural change/change of ownership to Aspen Group, Inc. (AGI) in an Action Letter dated November 16, 2017, with an effective change of ownership occurring on December 1, 2017. A Special Visit was conducted on November 28-30, 2018, a year after the change in ownership. The ensuing Action Letter dated March 4, 2019, announced the removal of the Notice of Concern and established the timeline for the current Special Visit.

AGI ownership has been institutionally transformational. Enrollment has grown from 278 in December 2017 to 1,469 as of December 10, 2019. As USU has experienced growth and improved financial health, the university has remained focused on its student-centered mission. The Quarterly Report presented to the Board of Trustees on December 18, 2019, cited session-to-session student persistence rates of 93% and a year-over-year retention rate at 71% (**[December 2019 BOT Persistence, Retention, Graduation Report](#)**). In addition, the Fall 2019 student satisfaction data demonstrate that students continued to express satisfaction with the university. Specifically, of those students enrolled after the transition to AGI, 90% express satisfaction in their educational experience (**[Fall 2019 Student Satisfaction Survey: Overall Education Experience \(Preliminary Findings\)](#)**). Complete Fall 2019 Student Satisfaction Survey Results will be available to the Visiting Team in the Exhibit Room. (**Exhibit Room: Fall 2019 Student Satisfaction Survey Results**).

## Accreditation and Approvals

- WSCUC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC)
- California Bureau for Private and Postsecondary Education (CABPPE)
- California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (CTC)
- Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE)
- California Board of Registered Nursing (CABRN)
- Project Management Institute (PMI)

State Authorizations: Because California is a non-participating state in NC-SARA, USU has worked diligently to seek and obtain state authorizations from departments of higher education wherever required. Currently, the institution is authorized and/or approved in approximately 45 states and territories ([List of State Authorizations Approvals](#); [List of State Boards of Nursing Approvals](#)).

### 1.4 Major Changes Since the November 2018 WSCUC Special Visit

#### Primary Evidence

- USU Strategic Plan Matrix 2019-22 (Exhibit Link)
- Strategic Plan KPI Tracker 2019-22 (Exhibit Link)
- USU: A Guide to Academic Planning (Exhibit Link)
- April 2019 Academic Planning Meeting Notes (Exhibit Link)
- Academic Strategy and United States University Presentation (Exhibit Link)
- 2020-2021 Academic Leadership Summit Gantt Chart (Exhibit Link)
- Active Enrolled University Student Population December 2017 to December 2019 (Figure 1)
- USU Board Roster, Samoulian CV, MacDonald CV (Exhibit Links)
- Burrus CV, Wardlow CV, Bradley CV, USU Organizational Chart (Exhibit Links)

The following institutional changes have occurred since the last WSCUC visit:

#### Strategic and Academic Planning

The Strategic Plan (“Pillars of Progress”) referenced in the March 4, 2019 Action Letter was formally presented to the Board of Trustees at the March 5, 2019 meeting ([USU Strategic Plan Matrix 2019-22](#)) and was approved for formal implementation on July 1, 2019. Protocols for monitoring the initial progress of the plan, developed concurrently with the plan, are presented to the Board at its quarterly meetings ([Strategic Plan KPI Tracker 2019-22](#)).

An Academic Planning Process was simultaneously initiated in 2019. The President (and then Interim Provost) sent a brief overview, “United States University: A Guide to Academic Planning,” ([USU: A Guide to Academic Planning](#)) to the Faculty in March. An initial meeting

was held in April during which a description of the Academic Planning Process and the central role of the faculty was discussed. The group agreed that each college was to place a primary focus upon an expansion of the academic portfolio ([April 2019 Academic Planning Meeting Notes](#)). The appointment of Dr. Scott Burrus as Provost in August provided continued focus on the process. He presented “Academic Strategy and United States University” to the Board of Trustees at the September 24, 2019 meeting ([Academic Strategy and United States University Presentation](#)). A two-day “Academic Leadership Summit” in November served to obtain clarity and commitment to 2020 academic initiatives aligned to the Strategic Plan ([2020-2021 Academic Leadership Summit Gantt Chart](#)).

### Institutional Growth

Since the last WSCUC Special Visit of November 27-28, 2018, the total active student population has more than doubled in size from 634 to 1384 (December 10, 2019). Figure 1. Active University Student Population December 2017 to December 2019 displays the month-by-month increase in the university’s student population.

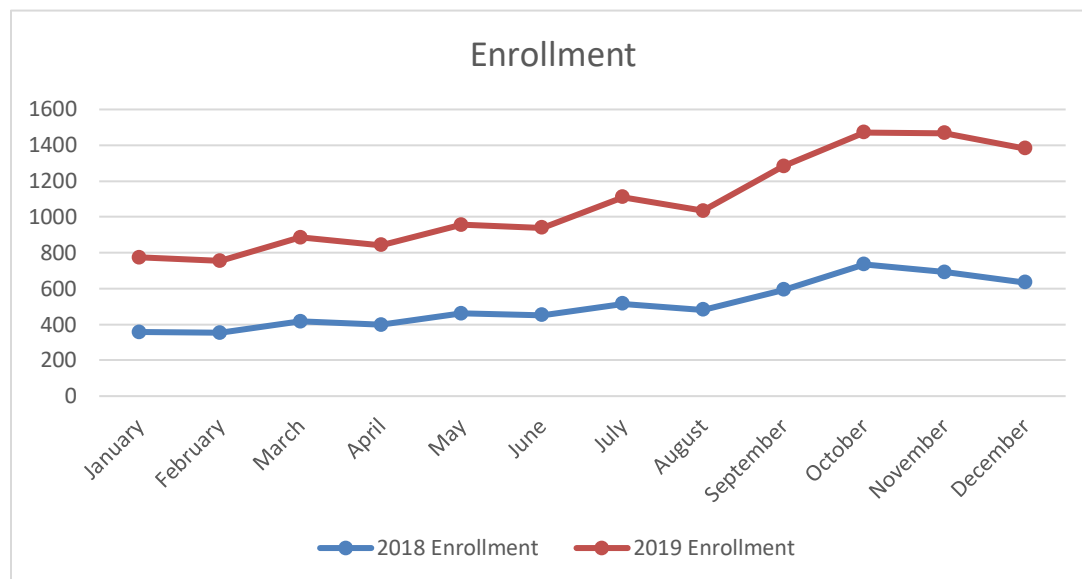


Figure 1. Active Enrolled University Student Population December 2017 to December 2019

### Governance and Administration

The Board of Trustees, chaired by Ms. Patricia E. Potter, has welcomed two new members since the last WSCUC Special Visit: Ms. Pilar Samoulian, a nurse leader with over 40 years of experience in both acute and long-term care, and Mr. Todd MacDonald, a former global accounts leader working within Microsoft’s domestic and international markets ([USU Board Roster](#), [Samoulian CV](#), [MacDonald CV](#)).

The institution’s administration, led by President Steven A. Stargardter, has welcomed three key leaders: Dr. Scott Burrus (Provost); Dr. Rebecca Wardlow (Dean, College of Education), and Dr. Gregory Bradley (Dean, College of Business and Technology). These team members join Dr.



Jennifer Billingsley (Dean, College of Nursing and Health Sciences), Dr. Elizabeth Archer (Associate Provost) and Mr. David Noriega (Executive Director of Registrar Operations and Academic Compliance), rounding out the President's Council. ([Burrus CV](#), [Wardlow CV](#), [Bradley CV](#), [USU Organizational Chart](#))

## **2. Statement on Report Preparation**

The preparation of this Special Visit Report was facilitated by the ALO, Dr. Steven Stargardter, President. In so doing he convened a Special Report Steering Committee to review progress and offer suggestions. Dr. Scott Burrus, Provost, and Dr. Elizabeth Archer, Associate Provost, worked closely with Dr. Stargardter in addressing the three issues raised and compiling the primary evidence to support the narrative. Prior to the submission of this Report to the WSCUC, a draft version of the Report was circulated to the USU Community. A copy of the submitted report will be placed on the University website in preparation for the April 2-3, 2020 Special Visit.

## **Responses to Issues Identified by the March 4, 2019 Special Visit Action Letter**

### **3.1 Evaluate and set realistic enrollment targets based on market analysis and resource allocations necessary to sustain program quality. (CFR. 3.4)**

Primary Evidence:

- Comparable Tuition rates FNP (Table 1 in Section 1 above)
- Tuition and Fees Website Page (Web Link)
- Marketing Costs (Exhibit Link)
- Approved FY 2021 Budget (Exhibit Room)
- Faculty Website Page (Web Link)
- 2019 Course Development (Exhibit Link)
- 2019 Assessment Planning Table (Exhibit Link)
- Academic Leadership CVs (Exhibit Room)
- OFE Growth Overview (Exhibit Link)
- Project Concert Materials (Exhibit Room)
- USU Organizational Chart (Exhibit Link)
- Sample Program Revision Proposal (Exhibit Link)
- Articulation Agreements Website Page (Web Link)

USU evaluates and sets enrollment targets based on a market analysis that is aligned to the university's mission to offer affordable, relevant, and accessible degree programs, differentiating itself by focusing this analysis on the cost of education to students. USU benchmarks a program's tuition to that of comparable degree programs offered by similar institutions, and then addresses this analysis by offering programs that are materially less expensive than comparable universities (as demonstrated by the MSN-FNP analysis in the Background section of this report). USU also examines payment methods offered by comparable universities from this cost-savings perspective. For example, the university instituted an innovative interest-free Monthly Payment Plan (MPP) as a payment option that permits students to pay their tuition and fees over a scheduled, fixed period of months (<https://www.usuniversity.edu/tuition-fees/>).

As part of the zero-based budgeting process, USU forecasts enrollment targets for each program which are reviewed with Marketing to confirm potential demand for each program based on internet advertising demand analysis, such as search traffic and current lead volume (**Marketing Costs**). Based on historical lead volumes within each academic area and an analysis of lead costs, the enrollment targets are periodically adjusted to ensure that they are both realistic and achievable. Moreover, the university monitors the cost of enrollment (COE) for each newly enrolled student. Current analysis demonstrates that while the university is increasing enrollment, it is also reducing its cost per enrollment.

	Nov - Jan 2019	Feb - Apr 2019	May - Jul 2019
Advertising Spend	\$ 462,761	\$ 456,950	\$ 438,943
Total Enrollments	251	317	514
6-month Avg. COE	\$ 1,620	\$ 1,619	\$ 1,078

Assumptions of potential “no show” rates and persistence and retention information are incorporated into the enrollment projections. Satisfactory academic progress, graduation, and the average number of courses taken per session are also factored in to create a working revenue model. Once the model has been presented to and discussed with President Stargardt, it is embedded in the final budget presentation that is reviewed and approved by the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees, the Board of Managers, and ultimately by the Board of Trustees as a whole (**Exhibit Room: Approved FY 2021 Budget**).

As part of the budgeting process, academic leadership ensures appropriate allocation of resources necessary to sustain program quality based on budgeted enrollment growth. Sufficiency of faculty to deliver instruction is considered as part of this process. Specifically, in December of 2018, the number of faculty was 116; as of December 31, 2019, the number of faculty is 183 (<https://www.usuniversity.edu/about/faculty/>). USU also invested in a faculty management system that provides consistent and efficient management of faculty data, files, and communications, and allows for faculty credentialing and evaluation. In addition to investing in faculty, USU allocated resources devoted to curriculum improvements in all degree programs (**2019 Course Development**). USU also maintains its support for assessment by funding additional stipends for adjunct faculty to participate in the annual Program Learning Outcomes Assessment scoring process, more of whom are needed as enrollments and sample sizes grow (**2019 Assessment Planning Table**). To further ensure substantive resource allocation necessary to sustain program quality across all programs, USU has also reinvested in strengthening its Academic Leadership team (**Exhibit Room: Academic Leadership CVs**).

Another resourcing example is the Office of Field Experience (OFE), which supports program quality by facilitating clinical placements for the university's largest academic program, the MSN-FNP. Since the end of 2018, while the MSN-FNP program grew by 128%, the percentage of affiliation agreements facilitated by the OFE grew by 534%. At the end of 2018, the OFE was staffed by 4 personnel while at the end of 2019, the OFE is budgeted for 8 positions ([OFE Growth Overview](#)). The OFE invested in Project Concert, which the OFE utilizes to manage student field placement (**Exhibit Room: Project Concert Materials**). Moreover, the university invested in enhancing the clinical immersion experience, which now includes additional faculty and staff support. With this infrastructure in place, the institution is well-positioned to support other programs that require field experience/placement ([USU Organizational Chart](#)). USU remains committed to the allocation of all necessary resources to support student success.

Over the past year, USU has learned how to set realistic enrollment targets based on market analysis. This learning has informed how the university approaches its academic and strategic planning and how it plans to grow in the future. Specifically, the university, in alignment with its mission and history, is reinvigorating the Teacher Credential Preparation Program and revising the existing Master's degree programs to be more practitioner-focused and affordable ([Sample Program Revision Proposal](#)). Further, in partnership with AGI, USU is committed to developing partnerships that will grow undergraduate programs (<https://www.usuniversity.edu/prospective-students/transfers/>). We believe that with our current foundation in place, the university is well positioned for its next phase of thoughtful, measured growth.

### **3.2 Closely monitor financial performance relative to plan to ensure that realistic budgets based on accurate estimates of enrollments are developed. (CFR 3.4)**

#### Primary Evidence

- 2019 Population Rollover Report (Exhibit Link)
- 2019 December BOT P&L (Exhibit Room)
- USU New Student Enrollment December 2017 to Present Forecast vs Actual (Figure 2)
- 2019 Fall Zero-Based Budgeting Launch PPT (Exhibit Link)
- Sample Budget Template (Exhibit Link)
- Sample Budget Update (Exhibit Room)

USU closely monitors financial performance relative to plan to ensure that enrollment projections are achieved. The most recent financial report to the Board of Trustees (as demonstrated in Figure 2) shows on average a variance of actual to plan of 10% over estimated enrollment. The University attributes its financial progress to the following factors: 1) improved enrollment projections; 2) increased enrollment; 3) focused marketing efforts; 4) inclusive budgeting process; and 5) ongoing budgetary monitoring. The process by which USU has improved its enrollment projections is detailed in Section 3.1 of this report. An important outcome of this monitoring is that the University has seen a student population growth from December 2018 to December 2019 from 634 to 1384 ([2019 Population Rollover Report](#)), which has resulted in the University improving its financial health and well-being. Specifically, at the time of this report preparation, USU is no longer running a deficit (**Exhibit Room: 2019 December BOT P&L**).

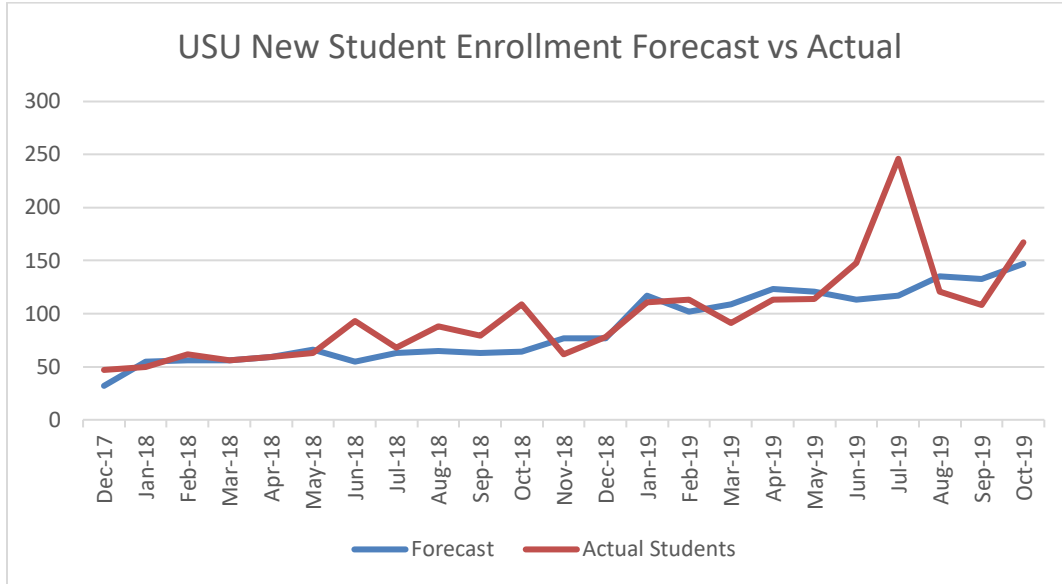


Figure 2. USU New Student Enrollment December 2017 to Present Forecast vs Actual

Given the university’s ability to accurately estimate enrollment, USU is able to establish realistic budgets based on achievable targets for enrollment. The FY20 Zero-Based Budget Planning Process was initiated by the CFO as part of a community “All Hands “meeting ([2019 Fall Zero-Based Budgeting Launch PPT](#)). A description of the university’s accounting structure was followed by the identification of “Budget Owners.” Community members learned that the process itself has three primary goals:

1. Engaging in a collaborative analysis of all colleges and departments;
2. Identifying key costs and their drivers; and
3. Ensuring that costs requiring administrative approval have been captured as part of the process.

Subsequent to the initial meeting, templates were distributed to budget owners as to the line items for which they are responsible ([Sample Budget Template](#)). They were also provided with access to vendor information and historical data as needed. The overarching goal of the process is to encourage budget owners to consider all financial aspects of their colleges and departments in order to process and gather appropriate information to determine forecasted costs.

After collegiate and departmental decisions, the budget submissions are reviewed by the Offices of the President, CFO, and Provost. This review is followed by another round of discussions with various budget owners prior to institutional agreement and submission to the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees and the AGI ownership group. When the budget becomes operationalized, the President and CFO review each month’s “close,” to determine that no material or unexpected variances exist. Additionally, monthly reports are provided to AGI and quarterly updates are provided to the Board of Trustees (**Exhibit Room: Sample Budget Update**).

Until recently, USU was a small institution focused almost entirely on teaching and learning and financial viability. While continuing its focus on teaching and learning, since its partnership with AGI, the university has been able to move forward towards financial health as a result of increased investment in student support infrastructure, online program development, marketing, and continued alignment with the university's mission. Moreover, the university also enhanced its strategy by differentiating itself by providing affordability-focused education. This additional investment has allowed the university increased sophistication and precision when it comes to forecasting enrollment because we are focused on who our students are and the education they are seeking. We will continue to monitor enrollment trends as we continue to grow the university's programmatic portfolio.

The initial budget cycle after the assumption of ownership by AGI was hallmarked by consultation, discussion, negotiation, and a timely institutional process. That budget cycle demonstrated the ability to monitor financial performance relative to plan. Currently, the university is in the midst of preparing for its next budget cycle. Based on its success from the last year, the university continues to ensure an inclusive process, which includes faculty involvement and aligns to strategic and academic planning. We believe that this process will result in continued precision when it comes to forecasting enrollment.

### **3.3 Optimize the implementation of the Service Level Agreement through regular assessment, including all stakeholders, of the efficacy and quality of services provided. (CFRs 2.13, 3.5)**

Primary Evidence:

- Service Level Agreement (Exhibit Link)
- WSCUC's "Agreements with Unaccredited Entities Policy" (Web Link)
- Sample Biannual SLA Report (Exhibit Link)
- Sample Quarterly/Annual SLA KPI Report (Exhibit Room)
- 2019 Board of Trustees Minutes (Exhibit Room)

The Service Level Agreement (SLA) ([Service Level Agreement](#)) was designed to delineate responsibilities between USU and AGI as of December 1, 2017 – the date upon which AGI officially assumed ownership of the university. Stated differently, the SLA serves as a type of intra-organizational memorandum of understanding to determine the roles and responsibilities of various offices both within USU and AGI. The construction of its framework was guided and informed by WSCUC's "Agreements with Unaccredited Entities Policy" (<https://www.wscuc.org/content/agreements-unaccredited-entities-policy>) and the accompanying "Outsource Services Table." In the SLA responsibilities are delineated so that USU is clearly responsible for course development, pedagogy and instruction, and faculty; whereas AGI is responsible for marketing and auxiliary services such as human resources, legal compliance, and technology support.

Since the last Special Visit, USU has continuously monitored the effectiveness of the SLA to ensure that the university maintains its focus on teaching and learning ([Sample Biannual SLA](#)

**Report**). USU developed a methodology of tracking achievement of key performance indicators related to the SLA (**Exhibit Room: Sample Quarterly/Annual SLA KPI Report**). This document is shared with the Board of Trustees on a quarterly basis (**Exhibit Room: 2019 Board of Trustees Minutes**). Highlights include AGI tasks delineated in the SLA:

- Provide and manage Learning Management System
- Library Support Services
- Institutional Research Reports
- Student-Facing Technology
- USU Network Systems
- Human Resources

In addition to the methodology above, qualitative comments were solicited and received from the following stakeholders: the President, the Provost, the CFO, the Associate Provost, Deans, Program Directors, the Registrar, and lead faculty. These sessions, facilitated by the Office of Institutional Research, were designed to enable the USU community to measure the effectiveness of the SLA in relation to the aspirations identified within the document. Each session was highlighted by group discussion as to both successes and continuing challenges of the SLA.

Moreover, as detailed in this report, because of the infrastructural and operational support from AGI, the university is trending towards financial health while experiencing dramatic growth, a clear indicator of the effectiveness of the SLA. The university remains committed to ongoing and transparent daily communications with its colleagues at AGI as well as to an “Operating Check-In Meeting,” undertaken Tuesday mornings among the USU and AGI leadership groups.

Through this process USU has learned that the university is well-supported by AGI as evidenced by the data presented in this report and the university’s improved financial health. As a result, it appears that instead of continued monitoring of the relationship in isolation, we will recommend to the Board of Trustees that Key Performance metrics relevant to the SLA be embedded within the university’s strategic plan.

#### **4. USU’s Preparation for the Next Accreditation Visit**

Primary Evidence:

- 2019 September Board Minutes (Exhibit Room)
- Academic Strategy and United States University (Exhibit Link)

Given that USU has demonstrated compliance with the recommendations stemming from the last Special Visit, the university is already focused on preparing for the 2022 Accreditation Visit. To this end, the university has developed an academic strategic plan and refreshed the university strategic plan, both of which were reviewed by the Board of Trustees at its September 2019 meeting (**Exhibit Room: 2019 September Board Minutes**). The academic strategic plan focuses on three foundational areas: 1) People, and specifically continuing to develop and support its faculty; 2) Programs, which includes continuously improving existing academic

program offerings and developing new academic programs; and 3) Partnerships, which will enable the university to organically grow all of its degree programs. Since the university has now turned the corner towards financial health, the university community is engaged in and excited about this next phase of the university's history. ([Academic Strategy and United States University Presentation](#))

## **5. Concluding Statement**

This report reflects USU's commitment to the open and transparent communication with the Accrediting Commission referenced in CFR 1.8. In addressing each of the three issues raised by the Commission in its March 4, 2019 Action Letter, USU has attempted to provide substantive responses with appropriate evidentiary documentation. While we believe the university has responded to the issues identified by the Commission, upon reflection we have learned that as a community we are able to simultaneously manage a rapidly evolving and growing university while adhering to our student-centered mission.

As discussed in this report, USU's engagement with its colleagues at AGI has resulted in the provision of support and resources facilitating the university's success in enrollment and financial growth. The unwavering institutional commitment to our students, demonstrated by the Board of Trustees, university leadership, faculty, staff, and all members of the university community, account for the outcomes demonstrated herein.

The entire USU community believes that it remains on a demonstrably progressive track to provide its students with a supportive and relevant educational experience. We look forward to welcoming the Visiting Team to campus on April 2, 2020.

## **6. Acronyms, Figures, Tables, and Exhibits**

### **6.1 List of Acronyms**

#### Section 1:

USU –United States University  
WSCUC – WASC Senior College and University Commission

#### Section 1.1:

MBA – Master of Business Administration  
AGI – Aspen Group, Inc.  
MSN-FNP – Master of Science in Nursing - Family Nurse Practitioner Program  
MPP – Monthly Payment Plan

#### Section 1.2:

BAM – Bachelor of Arts in Management  
BSHS – Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences

BSIT – Bachelor of Science in Information Technology  
MAEd – Master of Arts in Education  
MSN – Master of Science in Nursing  
RN-BSN – Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing

Section 1.3:

IAC – InterAmerican College  
CABPPE – California Bureau for Private and Postsecondary Education  
CABRN – California Board of Registered Nursing  
CCNE – Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education  
CTC – California Commission on Teacher Credentialing  
PMI – Project Management Institute

Section 3.1:

COE – Cost of Enrollment  
OFE – Office of Field Experience

Section 3.3:

SLA – Service Level Agreement

## 6.2 List of Figures and Tables

### Figures

Figure 1. Active Enrolled University Student Population December 2017 to December 2019 (Section 1.4)

Figure 2. USU New Student Enrollment December 2017 to Present Forecast vs Actual (Section 3.2)

### Tables

Table 1. Comparative Tuition Rates for MSN-FNP to Benchmarked Institutions (Section 1.1)

## 6.3 List of Exhibit Links

### Section 1:

[WSCUC Special Visit Steering Committee Composition and Initial Minutes \(01.0a\)](#)

[WSCUC Special Visit Report Steering Committee Sample Minutes \(01.0b\)](#)

### Section 1.1



[2018-2019 Graduate Survey: Currently Employed](#) (01.1a)  
[2018-2019 Graduate Survey: Usefulness of Education](#) (01.1b)  
[2018 Population Rollover Report](#) (01.1c)  
[2019 Population Rollover Report](#) (01.1d)

### Section 1.3

[December 2019 BOT Persistence, Retention, Graduation Report](#) (01.3a)  
[Fall 2019 Student Satisfaction Survey: Overall Education Experience \(Preliminary Findings\)](#) (01.3b)  
[List of State Authorizations Approvals](#) (01.3c)  
[List of State Boards of Nursing Approvals](#) (01.3d)

### Section 1.4

[USU Strategic Plan Matrix 2019-22](#) (01.4a)  
[Strategic Plan KPI Tracker 2019-22](#) (01.4b)  
[USU: A Guide to Academic Planning](#) (01.4c)  
[April 2019 Academic Planning Meeting Notes](#) (01.4d)  
[Academic Strategy and United States University Presentation](#) (01.4e)  
[2020-2021 Academic Leadership Summit Gantt Chart](#) (01.4f)  
[USU Board Roster](#) (01.4g)  
[Samoulian CV](#) (01.4h)  
[MacDonald CV](#) (01.4i)  
[Burrus CV](#) (01.4j)  
[Wardlow CV](#) (01.4k)  
[Bradley CV](#) (01.4l)  
[USU Organizational Chart](#) (01.4m)

### Section 2:

None

### Section 3.1:

Marketing Costs (03.1a)  
[2019 Course Development](#) (03.1b)  
[2019 Assessment Planning Table](#) (03.1c)  
[OFE Growth Overview](#) (03.1d)  
[USU Organizational Chart](#) (03.1e)  
[Sample Program Revision Proposal](#) (03.1f)

### Section 3.2:

[2019 Population Rollover Report](#) (03.2a)  
[2019 Fall Zero-Based Budgeting Launch PPT](#) (03.2b)  
[Sample Budget Template](#) (03.2c)

Section 3.3:

[Service Level Agreement](#) (03.3a)  
[Sample Biannual SLA Report](#) (03.3b)

Section 4:

[Academic Strategy and United States University](#) (04)

Section 5:

None

#### **6.4 List of Exhibit Room Items**

Exhibit Room items will be available to the Visiting Team, including but not limited to the following:

2019 December BOT P&L (Section 1.1)  
Approved Programs List (Section 1.2)  
Fall 2019 Student Satisfaction Survey Results (Section 1.3)  
Approved FY 2021 Budget (Section 3.1)  
Academic Leadership CVs (Section 3.1)  
Project Concert Materials (Section 3.1)  
2019 December BOT P&L (Section 3.2)  
Sample Budget Update (Section 3.2)  
Sample Quarterly/Annual SLA KPI Report (Section 3.3)  
2019 Board of Trustees Minutes (Section 3.3)  
2019 September Board Minutes (Section 4)

#### **6.5 List of Appendices**

None