



# Holy Apostles College & Seminary

33 Prospect Hill Road, Cromwell Connecticut, 06416-2027 ~ [www.holyapostles.edu](http://www.holyapostles.edu)

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

September 1, 2022

The Association of Theological Schools  
The Commission on Accrediting  
10 Summit Park Drive  
Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1110

Dear ATS Board of Commissioners,

I welcome your visit and am confident that we will benefit from your assessment. Our report will describe how Holy Apostles has undergone and is still undergoing a transformation into a faith-based institute of higher education that is sufficiently professional and modern. With that stated, we greatly honor and value our origin as a small, college level, preparatory seminary founded in 1956 by the Franciscan Father Eusebe-Henri Menard O.F.M.

Our transformation will continue especially in fostering a culture of assessment that is to include a well-developed dashboard of key financial and academic indicators to regularly review internally and with the board. This dashboard is in its beginning stage.

In addition, the development of a systematic assessment process of our academic programs and student learning outcomes is essential for Holy Apostles to flourish. This assessment is to include supervision and accompaniment of students and seminarians pursuing our M.Div. professional degrees.

In the past, Holy Apostles tended to approach assessment as an accreditation requirement. Now it is understood as a comprehensive process of institutional improvement over time. As such, this transformation is taking longer to accomplish.

I want the visiting team to be aware of one sequencing item regarding this report. As noted in the report, Holy Apostles is in the midst of revising its strategic plan. A draft of that plan is included in the report. However, given the timing of the need to submit the report, and the normal cycle of Board of Directors' meetings, Board actions regarding the status of planning is happening after report submission. More updates on this process will be available when the visiting team is on campus.

To institute these processes of assessment involves a transformation of our academic and human culture at Holy Apostles. This is taking place so that assessment is accorded a value of high importance as it rightly deserves. I am grateful for our executive team and the Board of Directors, led by Very Rev. Martin Rooney M.S.A., for their support in this transformation. Such work includes not only ascertaining change that must take place, but requires the finesse to institute it. Gratitude is especially due to Dr. Rick Stephens, Dr. Lesley DeNardis, Dr. Thomas Sabbagh, Mr. William Russell, Mr. Jason Gill, and Reverend Danh Van Nguyen M.S.A., and Mr. Steve Schultz.

Respectfully,

Father Peter S. Kucer, M.S.A.  
President-Rector

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## **ATS Self-Study for Holy Apostles College and Seminary**

**Prepared by**

**Very Rev. Peter Samuel Kucer, MSA President-Rector Holy Apostles College and Seminary  
and  
Dr. Rick Stephens, Interim VP for External Affairs**

### **Introduction**

Some brief context is helpful in understanding developments at HACS since both its self-study in 2017 and the most recent focused report. In the fall of 2019 decades of leadership turned over with Fr. Peter Kucer named President/Rector. Fr. Kucer inherited an institution that had served well as a seminary, but that was being radically transformed by online delivery to a college as well as a seminary. HACS was also primed for a similar transformation from an informal, organization, as Fr. Kucer has noted, into one more fully developed as a modern institution of higher education.

The challenges associated with such change, impacting all corners of HACS, are well-documented in the exchanges between HACS and ATS. It must be noted, however, that HACS, under the leadership of Fr. Kucer, has heard, understood, and taken to heart the necessity of changes in areas noted by ATS. Most importantly, HACS has taken affirmative steps in becoming that modern and professional institution of higher education.

These steps taken are impacting not just form, but process, and thereby both culture and personnel. In the past year alone, substantial developments have occurred administratively and within the Board of Directors. These have brought new talent and experience to HACS, while also building new organizational pathways. Just in terms of personnel and organizational structure these changes include, but are not limited to:

- Vice President for Administration—new position and personnel
- Vice President for External Affairs—interim position/temporary
- Vice President for Academic Affairs—revised from Chief Academic Officer and new personnel
- Associate Dean for Academic Affairs—revised position and promoted personnel
- Instructional Designer—new position and personnel
- Field Education Coordinator, online and on-campus, and Dean of Women—new personnel
- Human Formation Coordinator- new position and personnel
- Executive Director of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs—new position and promoted personnel
- Assistant Director of Campus Operations—revised position and promoted personnel

- Registrar—revised position and promoted personnel
- CFO—search underway for new hire
- Associate Vice President for Advancement and Outreach—search underway
- Grant Writing—contracted with new vendor
- ITS services—new vendor
- Director for Human Resources—revised position/personnel search underway
- Board of Directors—new members/bylaw revisions/leadership changes
- Revised Mission Statement and Strategic Plan
- Revised budgeting process and strengthening of the fiscal status
- Institutional Research—refined processes and internal personnel appointment

HACS is an institution that is in motion. The personnel, both legacy and new, are possessed of a self-awareness regarding what must be done. Critical to success going forward is the establishment of a team, represented by the personnel and positions noted above, committed to mission, and just a clearly capable of delivering. While work remains to be done, significant and strategic steps have already been taken. HACS is not the same institution it was in 2017.

## **Standard One—Mission and Integrity**

Holy Apostles College and Seminary (HACS) has engaged in a comprehensive process to clarify mission and ensure integrity of its practices. This process has become more robust with board, administration/staff, and faculty engagement. Key in all of this has been an intentional effort to better define relevant roles, while also restructuring within the institution. As President/Rector Fr. Peter Kucer has indicated on many occasions, HACS is becoming, intentionally, more professional and formal in its essential personnel and processes, while at the same time endeavoring to preserve valuable relationships which are at the heart of the institution.

### **Mission:**

- 1.1 The mission of HACS is, according to the 2019 Strategic Plan, “to promote, form and accompany youths and adults to the priesthood, and other ministries and apostolates within the Church as faithful witnesses of Christ” (see Attachment 1 from the 2019 Strategic Plan). This is contained in popular taglines of HACS, “cultivating leaders for the purpose of evangelization”, “Cultivating lay, consecrated and ordained missionary disciples for the purpose of evangelization.” As will be noted elsewhere in this report, the HACS mission has undergone review and revision.
- 1.2 The HACS mission has been widely disseminated via institutional publications including the institutional website. Key constituents are both aware of, and supportive of the mission. It is an essential element in hiring of mission critical personnel, qualifying for Board membership, etc.
- 1.3 The established mission, approved in the 2019 Strategic Plan was due for comprehensive review by the end of the 2022 calendar year. To this end HACS has engaged in a process of mission review and revision during the 2021-22 academic year. As President/Rector, Fr. Kucer undertook to outline key variables and issues to be considered and proposed these to a newly convened Executive Committee for the institution (see Attachment 2.1 for Exec Com Members). Comprised of key senior administrators the EC further elaborated on these items and proposed a mechanism for broad institutional input, including faculty and staff, Board of Directors members, and the sponsoring community, the Missionaries of the Holy Apostles (see Attachment 2.2 for review and revision committee members). The revised mission can be reviewed in Attachment 3. The essential wording now is:

“Holy Apostles College and Seminary forms and educates its students—laity, seminarians, clergy, and religious—as missionary disciples, servant leaders, and “co-workers in the vineyard.”

### **Integrity:**

- 1.4 Simultaneous to review of mission, HACS has undertaken review and revision of the institutional Strategic Plan (SP). It is mentioned here in connection to the comprehensive effort, under the leadership of President/Rector Kucer, to professionalize, streamline, clarify, and to establish stronger practices for communication and transparency, and the search for and appointment of qualified personnel across the institution. All these, and other relevant efforts, have built a stronger foundation for institutional integrity.

A recent review and report by NECHE noted these efforts in various ways. Attachment 4 documents such NECHE communication. Some highlights of that March 2022 NECHE report include:

- We thank Holy Apostles College and Seminary (HACS) for its report that documented the progress the institution has made to address its financial challenges during a period of “reorganization of processes and personnel ... across the College and Seminary.”
- Through the work of a newly created Fiscal Sustainability Task Force, HACS is also taking steps to develop a “comprehensive and equitable tuition and fee model for all students” to replace its current program of awarding campus-based seminary students scholarships totaling 100% of tuition, fees, room, and board.
- Enrollment growth over the past decade in the institution’s undergraduate and graduate online programs – from 310 course enrollments in Fall 2010 to 970 course enrollments in Spring 2020 – is impressive, and we appreciate that tuition waivers are being phased out as part of HACS’ plan to achieve financial stability.
- We also recognize that, since 2021, significant changes have taken place in the institution’s senior leadership, and we appreciate the Board’s continued development as a “true governance body.” But, as acknowledged by the institution, there is still much work to be done for it to achieve long-term sustainability.

HACS recognizes that that much of this is a “work in progress.” But it is progress that is empirical, supports institutional sustainability, and begins mapping a future in which it thrives in delivery of its mission.

#### 1.5 According to the HACS Admissions Page:

Holy Apostles is faithful to the Magisterium and teachings of the Catholic Church. If you believe you would be a good fit to learn within this framework – Catholic or not – we welcome you to apply. The mission of Holy Apostles is to cultivate Catholic leaders in every profession and walk in life for the purpose of evangelization. We ask our students to sincerely seek the truth in all things whether they are Catholic or not.

Within the new HACS mission this perspective is embodied in the following statement of values (see Attachment 3):

The fundamental values underpinning educational formation at Holy Apostles are:

- Christocentric teaching
- Catholic Orthodoxy by fidelity to the Magisterium
- Educational rigor and challenge
- Respect for the inherent dignity of all persons
- Holistic formation of students corresponding to the head, heart, and hands in
  - Truth
  - Love

- Goodness
- Beauty

1.6-1.7 HACS publications, including the website, indicate compliance with all relevant accreditations, as well as state and federal regulations. These include ATS, NECHE, the Connecticut Office of Higher Education (CTOHE), etc. HACS is in good standing in all instances.

## **ATS Standard 2—Planning and Evaluation**

It is fair to say that planning and evaluation at HACS has been primarily oriented to the short, rather than the long term. This is not to say that long term planning is absent (see Attachment 1 for the 2019 Strategic Plan). It is also fair to say that Fr. Peter Kucer has, since assuming the position of President/Rector in 2019, been moving steadily towards “best practices” in this regard. It is noteworthy that planning as a priority is evidenced by the frequency, inclusiveness, and communication of planning details which differs significantly from previous practice. This is less a critique of previous practice, but a statement of the commitment of HACS now to rational planning. Already, for example, the Executive Committee, and the Committee for Review and Revision of the Strategic Plan have met to revise planning priorities in light of accomplishments, and the need for integration of new personnel.

- 2.1 The reorganization of HACS, along with critical hires (VP for Administration and Interim VP for External Affairs) has fostered a greater awareness of the need, and a greater capacity for HACS to do meaningful planning and evaluation. As indicated in Standard One, both new mission and planning documents and processes have been generated throughout the 2021-22 academic year. This has included substantial reorganization (see Attachment 5 for Org Chart), new hires and retirements, leading to a firmer foundation for the routines of planning and evaluation. Of course, the most significant product has been the adoption of a new mission statement (see Attachment 3). But while the revised statement is important in and of itself, it was the process by which it was achieved that has begun to significantly reshape HACS, beyond reorganization of roles, reporting, etc. Three examples demonstrate the significance of these efforts to invest planning and evaluation throughout HACS.

First, the relationships and expectations between HACS, the Board of Directors (BOD), and the sponsoring community, the Missionaries of the Holy Apostles were clarified. For some months after the appointment of Fr. Kucer as President/Rector it was important to be working closely with Fr. Martin Rooney, BOD Chair as well as MSA Chancellor. Fr. Rooney was also serving within HACS as COO. Through careful discussions and reviews of accreditation standards Fr. Rooney stepped out of the COO role in order to give more leadership to the BOD. Fr. Kucer transitioned their relationship from operational and nearly daily to more formal reporting by the President/Rector to the BOD. In this new structure the BOD has begun to focus more on external governance while the President/Rector has been freed up to focus on administration and internal governance. A product of this is now a new mission statement and a new strategic plan ready for implementation in January 2023. (See Standard 9 for more governance details)

Second, at the initiative of the VP for Administration the President/Rector named an Executive Committee (EC) of senior administrators that meets weekly (see Attachment 2.1 for roster). These administrators represent key areas of HACS including academic affairs, business affairs, enrollment management and student affairs, general administration and personnel, the seminary, and accreditation. It is this body that served as the initial sounding board for revision of the mission and establishment of strategic

initiatives. As needed, other offices/personnel are invited to meetings of the EC to present specifics on various items or issues. With the guidance of the VP for Administration the EC has come to better define the planning and evaluation needs of HACS, its responsibilities to the BOD, and its management practices regarding the need for freedom and responsibility to be delegated to individual budget managers (see Attachment 6 for a draft budget planning process).

Third, a long-standing issue at HACS has been the practice of providing full tuition, room and board, and fee scholarships to seminary students—effectively meaning no revenue coming from that portion of the HACS student body. While temporary or informal fixes generated some funding over the years, such as occasional gifts of support by donors, this circumstance was noted frequently by both ATS and NECHE as an issue in need of resolution. Fr. Kucer responded by appointing a task force to focus generally on fiscal sustainability, but specifically requesting a proposal for resolution to the issue of seminary revenue. This brought to the table a representative array of offices/persons to explore options for generating revenue, as well as the potential effects. Chaired by the VP for Administration a proposal was generated, endorsed by the BOD, and implemented beginning for the Fall 2022 semester. (see Attachment 7 for task force recommendation)

- 2.2 The revised mission and strategic priorities document clearly outlines the planned direction for HACS, and provides the basis for formal revision of the strategic plan itself. Those strategic priorities are (see Attachment 3 for Mission and Strategic Priorities document):
1. Systematically Promote and Market Holy Apostles College and Seminary Nationally and Internationally
  2. Develop an Equitable, Affordable, and Institutionally Sustainable Tuition Policy
  3. Strengthen HACS's Administration for Planning, Budgeting and Reporting Processes
  4. Develop a Sustainable and Productive Advancement Structure
  5. Improve Academic Quality in Programs, Delivery—both Online and On-Campus—and Student Learning Outcomes
  6. Integrate Servant Leadership Training Throughout the Institution—Curricular and Co-Curricular
  7. Expand and Promote the Seminary Division through Recruitment (Nationally and Internationally) by Improving and Updating the Seminary Formation Program
- 2.3 The revised SP (see Attachment 8) differs significantly from the 2019 SP. While the 2019 SP was quite comprehensive, it was, in some ways both overwhelming and somewhat unmanageable. This is not a criticism of that plan per se. Rather, it is an evolved understanding of SP's by HACS, especially under the leadership of Fr. Kucer. The revised SP is briefer and focused on a limited number of achievable goals. In this regard it is much better matched to the resources and capacity of the institution to follow through.

The SP is more specific in terms of goals to be achieved, responsible offices/personnel identified, and timelines for completion. The SP is also iterated throughout the institution,

meaning that each department must operationalize the specifics. For example, in strategic initiative one regarding promotion and marketing for enrollment purposes, the Director of EM must identify the particular steps and needs in order to be successful. This is the same regardless of department, including fund raising, facilities, academic affairs, etc. Given that all these departments are represented via the EC, it is then routine for the EC to have a clear understanding of the institutional status regarding the SP.

A new facilitating tool for these purposes is a key indicators dashboard (see Attachment 9). The draft dashboard items, identified by the EC, are documented throughout the various offices, and centralized within Institutional Research. Specific data beyond the dashboard may be occasionally required from IR, such as accreditation annual reports, IPEDS, marketing surveys such as US News, etc. All such data provide a clearer picture of the status of the institution.

- 2.4 The steps taken in 2021-22 evidence significant accomplishments in providing long term, versus short term planning. It is evidence of an evaluation process that has resulted in many organizational and personnel changes in recent months. It also reflects a change in culture away from tending only the urgencies to positioning HACS for the future. Two examples serve to demonstrate:

First, with the hiring of a new Director of EM it became clearer that it was necessary to pay closer attention to enrollment trends, including year over year comparisons. Given that previously there was no EC meeting weekly, there was no meaningful reporting of EM progress. This made other work, such as budget forecasting extremely challenging. Now as a member of the EC the Director of EM is providing regular reporting, allowing administration to make reasoned decisions regarding allocation of resources, etc. While this seems a rather simple change, it is nonetheless substantive for HACS. Further, it evidences a commitment to reasoned planning and evaluation and adjustments as needed.

One of the issues is that admissions at HACS was previously managed through two different offices. This led to different reporting practices. That is being resolved, and the visiting team will be able to review this on campus. However, the “snapshot” reports on graduate admissions, as seen in Attachment 10.1 are being employed now for routine updating to the Executive Council. More robust reporting, as with the Undergrad enrollment data in Attachment 10.2 are forthcoming for Grad reports.

Second reference was made earlier to grant writing. While grant writing had occurred in the past, and some funding has resulted from those efforts, it is nonetheless clear that this kind of work was more “of the moment” than it was strategic. Thus, a decision has been made to contract with a professional grant writer to not only write grants, but to organize the entire grant writing process—including defining needs, building boiler plate copy for HACS applications, working across the institution from finance to facilities to academic affairs, as well as with the President/Rector on highly strategic needs. In addition, a roster of granting institutions, locally and nationally, as well as those favoring Catholic institutions is being drawn up, including calendaring of application cycles. In this case

the long term of grants, not simply the urgent need for grant funds, is the focus. (see Attachment 11 for grant documents, calendar, etc.)

- 2.5-2.6-2.7 It is reasonable to say that the array of evaluation practices are presently under review and revision. The cases noted in 2.3 regarding dashboards, and 2.4 regarding EM and grants illustrate how planning is being operationalized. It is also reasonable to say that this is an emergent organizational practice at HACS. It is a clear priority for Fr. Kucer's efforts to achieve a more professional organization. Led by the VP for Administration various evaluations ranging from annual personnel evaluations to reviews of vendor services, etc. are already in the works or developed. This is, nonetheless, an area in need of improvement at HACS.

As a case in point, the development of a more professional Department of Institutional Research (IR) has been ongoing throughout 2021-22. In the process of managing routine annual reports on enrollment and finance to both ATS and NECHE it became clear that data systems were not well coordinated. For example, there are often different student status definitions depending on to which entity a report is being made. At the same time, past practice and some turnover in various offices resulted in less than clear and consistent definitions. The Director of IR has therefore been tasked not only with coordinating with the various external reporting bodies, but has convened data meetings among critical departments in order to insure both compliance and consistency in reporting. Of course, this will promote better understandings of HACS status at any point as institutional evaluation proceeds.

Additionally, the Director of IR has been upgrading to best practice via development courses through the Association for Institutional Research (see attachment 12 for a listing of professional development courses taken or enrolled).

- 2.8 Before the Summer 2022 semester, students completed optional end of course surveys through Survey Monkey. After reviewing each survey, the Academic Dean then shared anonymous results with course instructors. In the Spring of 2021, the college conducted an exit survey of graduating students. The results of that survey indicated students were strongly satisfied with their experience (4.67/5.00—see Attachment 13).

However, we recognize the need to measure institutional effectiveness and assess student learning outcomes more intentionally. We are in an on-going process of implementing a far more robust assessment process. In fact, student learning outcomes is now the first priority under strategic initiative 5 within the new strategic plan.

Starting with the Summer 2022 semester, students complete the end of course survey through Populi. The system requires the student to submit the survey for the system to release grades as a means of ensuring higher survey completion rates. Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management and Student Affairs coordinated to create revised questions that better address adherence to the college's mission, the quality of the course and instruction, and how well the course contributed to achievement of the student's personal and vocational goals.

These results will be used to create overall institutional statistical measurements along with continuing to share assessment data with instructors. Other initiatives will create a more formal instructor evaluation process to provide feedback and opportunities for improvement to faculty.

In support of this, HACS has hired a fulltime instructional designer whose function will include assisting faculty with more intentionally assessing, documenting, and reporting student learning outcomes. As part of this process, courses will be revised to ensure that each course assignment ties directly to stated course outcomes. We will assess the course outcomes for each class to ensure they are relevant and proper. This process will allow us to better gather data for more robust statistical analysis.

The college will create and maintain a webpage with a statement of educational effectiveness.

### **Standard 3—Student Learning and Formation**

As noted in Standard 1 regarding Mission, HACS has reviewed and revised its statement of Identity, Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Initiatives (see Attachment 3). This document serves as the basis for revisions to the HACS Strategic Plan (see Attachment 8). Integral to that plan are initiatives specific to student learning and formation (see Attachment 14 Academic Initiatives Goals/Worksheet). All this work has been accomplished specifically within the 2021-2022 academic year, at the same time HACS is undergoing substantial reorganization on a wide variety of fronts.

These new statements are embedded in a culture and tradition that seeks to inspire and inform seminarians and students how:

- To deepen their personal relationship with Jesus Christ, who is Truth incarnate, and to integrate Him into every aspect of their lives.
- To understand, embrace, and live according to the clear teachings of the Church's Magisterium regarding faith and morals.
- To form ordained, consecrated and lay missionary disciples by cultivating the spiritual, human, intellectual and pastoral development of its seminarians and students to serve Christ's Church.
- To deliver a Catholic educational experience by means of a recognizably distinctive and unambiguous Catholic intellectual tradition.
- To instill a sincere devotion to the Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, personal prayer, and heartfelt service to others in order to form and prepare seminarians and students as effective witnesses of Christ to the culture.
- To educate and challenge seminarians and students to formulate and communicate a coherent Christian worldview based on faith and reason and thus become effective evangelists, catechists, and apologists for the Catholic faith.
- To strive to create and maintain excellence in teaching and learning, research and discovery, and service and engagement, through the Liberal Arts, Philosophy and Theology in accord with the clear Magisterial teachings of the Catholic Church.

More broadly, HACS adheres to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church in the formation and education of our students. The Magisterium is the true teaching of Christ's one Church on Earth, and our various programs reflect our faithful adherence to these teachings, handed down to the Church since apostolic times. As a reflection of our commitment to the Magisterium, we are in submission to the ecclesiastical authority of the Church through, the Bishop of Norwich, the Most Reverend Michael R. Cote.

The Eucharist is the center of seminary life for those on campus, which radiates into all the programs we offer, for both our commuter students and those studying through our distance learning programs.

As we are a college and seminary, HACS is one of the very few Catholic colleges in America where lay students and seminarians attend together many of the same classes – both on-campus and online. (See Attachments 15, 16 and 17 regarding student learning documentation for 3.1 through 3.7)

- 3.1 HACS attends to the intellectual, human, spiritual, and vocational dimensions of student learning and formation in its institutional goals and its curricular and co-curricular offerings in ways that are consistent with the school's mission and religious identity.
- 3.2 HACS demonstrates academic rigor in student learning and formation, with qualified instructors, scholarly research and resources, and graduate-level expectations appropriate to each degree it offers.
- 3.3 HACS demonstrates intercultural competency in student learning and formation by helping students understand, respect, engage, and learn from diverse communities and multicultural perspectives, inside and outside the classroom.
- 3.4 HACS demonstrates global awareness and engagement in student learning and formation by helping students respect, engage, and learn from global perspectives and sources, understand the global connectedness and mutuality of theological education, and increase their capacities for service and learning in globally interconnected contexts.
- 3.5 HACS demonstrates an understanding of learning and formation as lifetime pursuits by helping students develop motivations, skills, and practices for lifelong learning.
- 3.6 The school demonstrates sound pedagogy in student learning and formation, utilizing effective instructional designs and employing educational modalities that (a) are appropriate to its mission and capacities, (b) meet all applicable Standards and Policies and Procedures, and (c) help students achieve the learning outcomes for a given degree.
- 3.7 The school demonstrates an intentionally collaborative approach to student learning and formation by developing a cohesive and holistic curriculum, regardless of modality, that involves faculty and, as appropriate to the school's context and degree programs, librarians, student services personnel, field educators, and others—both in designing and in evaluating the curriculum.
- 3.8 Both on-campus and online fulltime and parttime instructors complete an on-boarding process to receive familiarization with our policies and procedures. This process is currently under review with the purpose of creating a more robust training course for faculty. This would be for new as well as existing faculty, on campus and online to ensure they receive quality training on best practices. (See Attachments 18, 19 and 20 regarding onboarding, etc.)

In support of these practices and efforts HACS has hired an instructional designer to assist and guide faculty in course design and assessment. Through the office of the

VPAA new academic policies have been promulgated emphasizing the need for more comprehensive compliance with best practices.

All new online students must complete a two-week online orientation course that familiarizes them with using the Populi LMS, Holy Apostles College and Seminary student policies and procedures, and introduces them to various resources, such as the Online Writing Lab and the Library.

HACS has a full staff maintaining the college's physical resources which also support the online program. A grounds maintenance supervisor and assistant are responsible for the maintenance of the school's physical infrastructure. HACS has a library staff sufficient to serve both on-campus and online students. Staff are readily available during school hours Monday to Friday. Afterhours emergency contact information is available for on-campus faculty and students.

- 3.9 Polices for instructor qualification and course expectations are explained in the Faculty Handbook—<https://holypostles.edu/faculty-resources/>. All graduate instructors are required to hold terminal degrees in their subject areas. Any exceptions must be approved by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the College President for an otherwise highly qualified candidate (see Attachment 21 for a current faculty roster—CV's will be made available for inspection at the time of the visit). Holy Apostles College and Seminary recently completed a review of all courses to standardize course syllabi and course presentation in Populi (see Attachment 22). Instructors are required to have meaningful, academic rigorous assignments spread throughout the semester that encourage robust interaction between the instructor and students, and between student peers.

Moving forward, Holy Apostles College and Seminary is transitioning to the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model as our instructional framework. The CoI model focuses on three interdependent components of instruction: social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence. The new Instructional Designer will engage in a collaborative process with faculty to review and standardize courses following the CoI model.

In the Spring 2022 semester HACS began revising course evaluations to improve student response rates and to create questions to provide more meaningful feedback on instructor engagement, the quality of each course, and how well course content advances students in our mission.

- 3.10 HACS uses only the modalities in 3.9.
- 3.11 All academic policies are publicly available on the college's website and published in the Academic Catalog--<https://holypostles.edu/catalog/>--and Student Handbook-  
- <https://holypostles.edu/current-students/>. Policies are regularly reviewed in coordination by the offices of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. Proposed changes are taken to either the Faculty Committee or Executive Committee for approval as appropriate.

- 3.12 The Academic Catalog explains the transfer credit policy. Graduate students may transfer a maximum of six credits from an accredited institution that have not already been applied to the award of a degree. As part of the admissions process, the Admissions Office reviews transfer credit requests following the criteria in the college's transfer credit policy.
- 3.13 Currently, HACS only offers an Advanced Standing Pathway for the online Master of Divinity in the New Evangelization. Applicants holding a Master's Degree in Theology or Pastoral Studies may apply for the Advanced Standing MDiv/NE. As explained on the MDiv/NE admissions page and in the MDiv/NE handbook, the Advanced Standing Pathway allows approved students to complete the program in as little as 48 credits instead of the normal 72 credits. The Pastoral Studies Program Director reviews each application to create an individualized list of courses taking into account the applicant's prior graduate work.
- 3.14 HACS currently does not have any programs requiring human subject research. If HACS ever establishes such a program, the school will establish a Human Subjects Research Committee to review research proposals to ensure they follow all applicable laws and regulations before approving the research proposal.

Otherwise, HACS does have an Academic Integrity policy in the Academic Catalog that includes a policy on the appropriate use of technology.

- 3.15 HACS admits Personal Interest (PI) students who may take courses purely for enrichment, exploration, or other purposes without being enrolled as a degree seeking student. PI applicants may apply as either undergraduate or graduate. Applicants must complete an application and are evaluated by the Admissions office for acceptance as a PI student. Please see PI Admissions information on the school website: <https://holyapostles.edu/admissions/personal-interest/>. Per the Academic Catalog, "Holy Apostles College & Seminary welcomes students who take courses for personal interest. Students may take classes for-credit or audit in the Personal Interest Program at the Undergraduate or Graduate level. Every personal interest student who does not intend to seek a degree or certificate may take as many credits as he or she wishes, provided that he or she meets the basic requirements of academic performance." Also, per the Academic Catalog, PI students wishing to matriculate into a degree-seeking program must submit an additional application and may take no more than 15 credits/2 semesters as an undergraduate PI student or 6 credits/1 semester as a graduate PI student.

## **Standard 4—Master’s Degrees**

HACS offers four programs at the level of the first graduate theological degree. Three of are oriented primarily toward ministerial leadership, including the on-campus Master of Divinity (MDiv), the online Master of Divinity in the New Evangelization (MDiv/NE), and the Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies (MAPS). The Master of Arts in Theology is oriented toward general theological studies. HACS also offers a Master of Arts in Philosophy, a subject foundational to the study of theology according to the norms of Catholic theological preparation. Additionally, Holy Apostles offers Post-Master’s Certificates in Theology, Pastoral Studies, and Philosophy, along with Graduate Certificates in Christian Wisdom, Youth and Young Adult Ministry, and Catholic Pastoral Counseling for Mental Health Professionals.

The range of programs enable HACS to engage its distinctive mission to cultivate Catholic disciples for the purpose of evangelization. The ministerial leadership programs are of three kinds:

- the on-campus Master of Divinity is pursued only by seminarians seeking ordination into the Catholic priesthood.
- The online Master of Divinity in the New Evangelization is open to Catholic laity and religious seeking theological and practical formation to answer the call for the New Evangelization.
- The Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies is pursued by laity and religious seeking to engage in ministerial service or strengthen their capacity in ministerial service.
- The academic programs include two areas of engagement – philosophy and theology – for the purpose of preparing students for doctoral studies, to strengthen them in their understanding of the Catholic faith tradition and provide them with a credential they need within their current or future job situations.

The on-campus Master of Divinity program is solely for those who have been sent to Holy Apostles as candidates for the priesthood; thus, it is a professional degree that includes an integrated priestly formation program per the norms of the Program of Priestly Formation.

In the Spring 2022 semester HACS launched an online-only Master of Divinity in the New Evangelization. The MDiv/NE is open to both lay Catholics and religious. It is a professional ministerial degree that offers students theology immersed in Sacred Scripture and practical formation intended to prepare students to respond to Pope St. John Paul II’s call for a New Evangelization. (See Attachments 23 and 24 regarding documentation for the MDiv/NE)

The Master of Arts program is divided into two tracks, an academic program, comprised of an Master of Arts in Theology and an Master of Arts in Philosophy, and a ministerial program, comprised of an Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies. The MA in Theology and the MA in Philosophy prepare clergy, religious, and laity for academic research and a possible future PhD, while the MA in Pastoral Studies prepares clergy, religious and laity for pastoral service to the Church and the world.

- 4.1 The on-campus Master of Divinity (MDiv) is a 96-credit professional ministerial degree designed for men preparing to be ordained to the Catholic Priesthood or permanent Diaconate. Successful completion of the Master of Divinity program attests to the recipient's competency for exercising priestly ministry gained from a thorough grounding in Sacred Scripture, Dogmatic and Moral Theology, Spiritual and Pastoral Theology, Canon Law, Liturgy, Homiletics and Church History.

The online Master of Divinity in the New Evangelization is a 72-credit professional ministerial degree designed for Catholics seeking theological and practical formation to answer the call for the New Evangelization to serve leadership or professional roles in the Church and the world or as a springboard for doctoral studies. Applicants must attest to being practical Catholics with a clergy recommendation letter. While the program is open to both Catholic laity and religious, it is not a priestly formation program.

- 4.2 HACS makes a distinction between the on-campus MDiv and the online-only MDiv/NE for theological reasons. The on-campus MDiv is a priestly formation program open only to Catholic men called to the priesthood and sent to Holy Apostles by their Bishop or superior to receive priestly formation. The online MDiv/NE is open to all Catholic laity and religious with the clear distinction that it is not a priestly formation program. While Bishops or religious superiors may direct candidates to enroll in the MDiv/NE, Holy Apostles does not consider it a program of priestly formation.

- 4.3 As a professional ministerial degree designed to prepare men for the priesthood, the on-campus Master of Divinity (MDiv) falls under Holy Apostles Seminary. Holy Apostles Seminary is committed to providing solid formation in all aspects of seminary life, in accord with the directives of the Catholic Church. It is guided by the norms established by the Holy See, notably in the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992), and by the norms established by the American Bishops in the *Program for Priestly Formation*.

The seminary especially aims to provide priestly education in a Catholic spirit through the on-campus MDiv. This means not only that Catholic teaching informs all instruction and all formational work, but also that it is reflected in the concern to provide personal and spiritual formation in a Catholic spirit, stressing the Gospel ideals. The life of the seminary is centered around the Eucharist, especially daily Mass; it is nourished by the Liturgy of the Hours and by personal prayer. The traditions of seminary life here encourage Eucharistic worship, frequent use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, devotion to Mary, love for the Church, respect for human life, concern for the poor, and a commitment to a priestly life of sacrifice and service.

The theological program consists of 120 recommended credits, of which 96 credits are applied to the MDiv degree. The program is consistent with the Program for Priestly Formation of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. As detailed in the *HACS Course Catalog*, the on-campus MDiv is deeply rooted in human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation.

As part of the Holy Apostles Seminary, the on-campus MDiv also includes supervised field experience and a program of manual labor. The Field Education program seeks to develop pastoral and liturgical skills in each seminarian through closely supervised ministry in urban and rural parishes, schools, retirement homes, hospitals and state correctional facilities, and through theological reflection on these ministries. The intent is that pastoral concern thoroughly penetrates the entire training of seminarians so that they will personally identify with the apostolic mission of the Catholic Church. The manual labor program seeks to develop a generosity of response to whatever tasks need to be done for the common good. Priests are to be “cheerful givers” when presented with the opportunity to “wash the feet of others.” If a seminarian can be a servant in small tasks, he will give generously in future ministry. As noted in the roster of hires at the beginning of this report, a new coordinator for field education has been hired.

The online Master of Divinity in the New Evangelization (MDiv/NE) is a professional ministerial degree that addresses various dimensions of formation throughout a student’s studies: human, spiritual, pastoral, and intellectual. In addition, each person who aspires to serve the Church should receive the tools necessary to lead others closer to God. While such an education necessarily includes intellectual formation, professional ministerial degrees require more than academic knowledge. In fact, a fuller education of not only the head, but also of the heart and hands, is indispensable to fully serve the diverse needs of God’s people.

While intellectual formation in the MDiv/NE is primarily provided through coursework, both the heart and the hands are formed through human, spiritual, and pastoral initiatives. Attentiveness to each dimension of formation throughout one’s tenure at Holy Apostles will assist the student in obtaining the tools necessary for lay ecclesial ministry and evangelization.

#### 4.4 Field experience is an integral part of the MDiv programming at HACS:

Students in the MDiv/NE must complete 30 hours of supervised field experience. The 30 hours is divided into 10 hours for each of the human, spiritual, and pastoral formation areas. Students normally complete the formation hour requirements within the first two years of enrollment in the program. The MDiv/NE works with students so they can begin working on the formation hours during students’ first semester. The field experience formation hours do not make up part of the program’s 72-credits. The formation requirements are noted on the student degree plan and on one’s official transcript. They must be completed to graduate. The MDiv/NE Program Director allows a variety of activities to meet the field formation hour requirement. The MDiv/NE Program Director ensures field formation experiences are supervised by those who are appropriately qualified, professionally developed, and regularly evaluated.

#### 4.5 HACS has remained relevant for its students through program development. It is also fair to say that such development is not fully routinized. This is recognized by HACS as a need for further work and structure. However, the most recent development of the MDiv/NE serves as a model going forward. In this case HACS developed the MDiv/NE

through a series of meetings that included administration, the Program Director, faculty, and an outside educational consultant. This included discussing program goals and objectives as outlined in the MDiv/NE Handbook and shown in the minutes of the program development meetings (Attachment: MDiv/NE Handbook). Going forward, the MDiv/NE Program Director regularly reviews the program goals and objectives, along with holding meetings with program faculty to regularly discuss these topics.

- 4.6 Holy Apostles offers three Masters of Arts degrees: the Master of Arts in Theology, the Master of Arts in Philosophy, and the Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies. The Master of Arts in Theology and the Master of Arts in Philosophy are primarily academic degrees. The Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies is primarily a professional degree. All three MA programs require 36 credit hours for completion.

**Master of Arts in Theology:** The Master of Arts in Theology program is a course of study designed to give both a broad acquaintance with the major theological disciplines, and the opportunity to choose a concentration. It is a flexible program designed to prepare students for ministry, teaching religion or theology, for a subsequent Post Master's Certificate, licentiate, or doctoral work, or for integrating their existing life and profession with a theological component. A student may concentrate in Bioethics, Church History, Dogmatic Theology, General Studies, Moral Theology, Sacred Scripture, or Thomistic Studies.

**Master of Arts in Philosophy:** The Master of Arts in Philosophy program is a course of study designed to give a broad acquaintance with the major philosophical disciplines. It is a flexible program, with a six-year time limit from entry into the program to completion of the degree requirements. The program is designed to prepare men and women for ministry, teaching philosophy, religion, or theology, for a subsequent Post-Master's Certificate in Theology, or for licentiate or doctoral work. Classes also serve as enrichment for persons in other professions wanting to deepen understanding of their faith or seeking to integrate their faith into their daily lives. Students may pursue one of five concentrations within the philosophy program: Christian Wisdom, Ethics, General Studies, History of Philosophy, and Systematic Philosophy.

**Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies:** The Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies program is a professional degree program designed to prepare students to serve competently and effectively in contemporary ecclesial ministries and lay leadership, especially within parish settings. This includes religious education at all levels, catechetical leadership, and youth ministry. A primary objective of the program is to develop in students an understanding of the ministry within the life and mission of the Roman Catholic Church. Students may pursue one of seven concentration areas: Apologetics, Catechetical Ministry, General Studies, Marriage and Family Studies, Pastoral Counseling, Spiritual Direction, and Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

- 4.7 Holy Apostles uses the standard Master of Arts nomenclature for all three MA degrees.

4.8 The program goals and learning outcomes of each program are as follows:

MA in Theology Program Goals:

1. To educate students in the discipline of Catholic theology, attending to the biblical, historical, philosophical, and systematic roots of Catholic life and belief in a manner that is critical, accurate, and informed by current scholarship;
2. To develop in students a coherent and detailed knowledge of their theological concentrations, including classical and current problems and insights in those concentrations, their developing methodologies, and their current scholarly literature, together with the ability to articulate this knowledge in speech and writing;
3. To train students in the skills of theological research, including the use of traditional library resources and new media resources, as well as in the normal methods and style of theology; and
4. To foster in students sound habits of study, dialogue, and discerning theological judgment, especially with a view to their roles in the work of evangelization and/or their further academic work in theology.

MA in Theology Program Learning Outcomes

Students earning the MA in Theology will:

1. Be able to identify and explain the biblical, historical, philosophical, and systematic foundations of Catholic life and beliefs in a manner that is critical, accurate, and informed by current scholarship;
2. Exhibit, in speech and writing, a coherent and detailed knowledge of their theological concentration, its developing methodologies, its current literature, its major theoretical constructs, and its classical and current problems and insights;
3. Manifest the skills of theological research, including facility with traditional library resources and new media resources, as well as the ability to recognize and correctly cite materials appropriate to academic theology;
4. Exhibit a critical understanding of diverse theological discourses and positions, assessing them critically and charitably in the light of the Catholic faith; and
5. Demonstrate competence in communicating Catholic doctrine accurately at a popular level, in a practical and commonly accessible way, whether by ordinary speech and writing or via the new media of social communication.

MA in Philosophy Program Goals

The M.A. in Philosophy at Holy Apostles College and Seminary serves the following goals:

1. To educate students in the history, major topics, and intellectual habits of Western philosophy, especially, in the rich diversity of the Catholic tradition, in the distinctively Catholic ways of understanding the relationship between faith and reason, and with consistent attention to the work of St. Thomas Aquinas;
2. To develop in students a coherent and detailed knowledge of their philosophical concentration, its developing methodologies, its current literature, its history, its major theoretical constructs, and its classical and current problems and insights;
3. To train students in the skills of academic research in philosophy, including the use of traditional and new media resources, as well as in the academic practices and styles common in the discipline; and
4. To foster in students a deep comprehension of contemporary cultures and their philosophical roots, for the purposes of constructive dialogue, sound critical discernment, and participation in the work of Catholic evangelization.

#### MA in Philosophy Learning Outcomes

Students earning the MA in Philosophy will be able:

1. To demonstrate advanced familiarity with the history and major topics of Western philosophy, including logic, epistemology, cosmology, anthropology, ethics, metaphysics, and natural theology, particularly but not exclusively as these are (a) treated in the broadly Catholic and Thomistic philosophical tradition, and (b) fields of inquiry where faith and reason may be mutually enriching;
2. To demonstrate a coherent and detailed knowledge of their philosophical concentration, its developing methodologies, its current literature, its history, its major theoretical constructs, and its classical and current problems and insights;
3. To demonstrate the ability to conduct research in the academic field of philosophy;
4. To present, in a practical and popular way, philosophical doctrines that are particularly useful or even essential to giving an account of the doctrines of Catholic faith, whether by ordinary speech and writing or via new media of social communication, including such topics as the nature of truth, the nature of the human person, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God; and
5. To describe and explain the role of the Western philosophical tradition in the development and explication of Christian doctrine in Christian antiquity, the Middle Ages and in modern and postmodern contexts.

## MAPS Program Goals

1. To educate students in the discipline of pastoral theology, with attention to Catholic social and missiological teaching, sound morals and doctrine, and worthy contemporary scholarship;
2. To equip students with current knowledge of relevant pastoral resources of all kinds, and with a practical familiarity with those resources most likely to be useful to each student's own role of service in the Church; and
3. To foster in students a love for pastoral ministry and an appropriate confidence in their own vocations to participate in the Church's mission.

## MAPS Program Learning Outcomes

Students completing the MAPS program will be able to:

1. Represent Catholic doctrine and morals appropriately and accurately in a pastoral setting, including catechesis, adult faith formation, and basic instruction in prayer and discernment.
2. Interpret magisterial, theological, and ritual texts accurately, insofar as these bear on common questions in religious education and on practical concerns in ministry.
3. Engage in and articulate mature pastoral-theological reflection, demonstrating prudence, knowledge of the faith, and a realistic appraisal of concrete pastoral/ministerial circumstances
4. Collaborate maturely and respectfully with others in ministry, including pastors, religious, laity, and non-Catholics.
5. Demonstrate competence in one of the program specializations by performing adequately in an appropriate exercise developed for each specialization by the MAPS program director, administered by qualified faculty, and approved by the Academic Dean.
6. Communicate effectively in the work of evangelization and ministry in a practical and popular way, whether by ordinary speech and writing or via the new media of social communication.

## Summative Evaluation

Students enrolled in the MDiv/NE complete a comprehensive examination and a Summative Evaluation Project. The comprehensive exam covers material from the MDiv/NE courses designed to allow the student to demonstrate academic competence. The Summative Evaluation Project requires students to apply knowledge from the

MDiv/NE in a practical way to their ministry or apostolate, and then submit a written report. The MDiv/NE Program Director approves and monitors all projects.

Students in the MAPS complete a 3 ½ hour written exam and a 1-hour oral exam. The MAPS written exam presents a scenario based on the student's concentration. The student must then respond to a series of questions designed to demonstrate mastery of the program learning objectives. The exam is open-book and students must cite relevant scholarship. After passing the written portion, the student sits for a 1-hour in-person or teleconference oral exam with two the two faculty members who graded the student's written exam. The faculty members review the student's written exam response and ask follow-up questions to assess the student's mastery of program learning objectives. Both exams are graded as pass/fail.

MA in Philosophy students and pre-Fall 2019 MA in Theology students complete a written and oral exam similar to the MAPS students. However, the written portion of the exam requires students to read and prepare a critique of an article relating to the student's concentration area.

MA in Theology students enrolled during the Fall 2019 semester and later complete ENG 890 Comprehensive Exam and Professional Paper Course. ENG 890 is a two-semester process. During the first semester of ENG 890, students complete a series of exercises leading up to a 1- hour oral exam over the MA in Theology core courses. During the next semester, students write a 10-page academic research paper to professional journal standards on a topic related to the student's concentration area under the guidance of a faculty advisor.

MA in Theology and MA in Philosophy students have the option to request to write a thesis instead of taking the comprehensive exam. Students planning to request permission to write a thesis must complete ENG 891 Academic Research, Design, and Writing. Students submit a thesis application and proposal. If approved, the student writes a thesis of about 50 pages under the guidance of a faculty advisor.

- 4.9 HACS has begun a process of formal program review during the Fall 2022 semester. This has coincided with the hiring of an instructional designer to assist, advise, and oversee the review, development, and implementation of all online courses. While yet to be fully developed and routinized, this personnel and resource will provide professors with suggestions on improving course content and delivery, as well as assessment of student learning outcomes.

More specifically, the investment in instructional design is intended to facilitate not only best practice in delivery, but more comprehensive data for program review across the curriculum. HACS intends to ensure that the learning outcomes for each course are relevant and clearly stated in terms of specific outcomes, that each course assignment ties directly into the stated learning outcomes of each course, and that these learning outcomes are documented and analyzed both individually and holistically each semester.

It is understood that this cannot be accomplished solely with the hiring of an instructional designer working with each faculty member. It will be necessary to offer professional development training for all faculty on assessing and documenting student learning outcomes.

These efforts are also reflected in the hiring process. For example, all new hires, full-time and part-time (both on-campus and online), will complete an orientation that includes training on assessing and documenting student learning outcomes. It is intended to have this process fully implemented by the start of the Fall 2024 semester.

Simultaneously, new faculty hiring will be screening more intentionally for experience in assessment of student learning outcomes. In this way the hiring practices will supplement the faculty development practices now being implemented.

4.10-4.12 Not applicable as Holy Apostles does not offer a Master of Theology degree.

**Standard Five N/A**

## **ATS Standard 6—Library and Information Resources**

HACS library and information services are both designed and have evolved to meet present day needs and challenges for students and faculty. In particular, these needs lean towards remote teaching and learning of adult students. HACS has been forward thinking in this regard, having developed online practices and services much earlier than most institutions. Of course, the pandemic has accelerated these practices. (All referenced tables are found in Attachment 25—other supporting documents will be available for inspection during the team visit)

### **Library Purpose and Role**

- 6.1 The mission of the Holy Apostles Library is to support the academic and formation programs of our college and seminary. Our mission statement is located on the library webpage under the “About our Library” tab and also in our Library Handbook (see Library Appendix). Based on this mission, the library is committed to serving all student and faculty populations both on and off campus via all modes of delivery and to providing access to information resources that promote lifelong learning. This mission statement forms the foundation for evaluating our library services and resources.

Since initial ATS membership in 2017, the library has provided information services to a growing community of graduate students. Registration numbers were taken from Populi graduate student program groups for these two semester comparisons summarized below and listed in Table A1 in the Library Appendix.

- Spring 2017 graduate student registration total of 351 students.
- Spring 2022 graduate student registration total of 428 students.
- 21.9% increase of the total graduate student registration from 2017 to 2022

- 6.2 The HACS library is understood as a central academic resource that serves to enhance the school’s educational programs. Library personnel play a significant and collaborative role in curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation.

The Director of Library Services participates in several campus wide committees that involve curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation. These committees include the Faculty Committee, the Graduate Faculty Committee, the Assessment Committee, and the Re-Development Committee for Populi courses. These four committees allow for her direct and productive interactions with both the Chief Academic Officer, the Director of Institutional Research, and various departmental chairs, faculty and staff colleagues. The Director of Library Services also chairs two committees that maintain campus-wide departmental membership. These committees include the Library Committee and the Copyright Compliance Committee (CCC).

The Cataloging Librarian and the LTA-Interlibrary Loans/Serials are also members of the Library Committee and the Copyright Compliance Committee (CCC). The inclusion of all library personnel on these two committees also allows for direct and productive interaction with both online and on campus faculty, as well as with the Chief Academic

Officer and the Administrator of Online Copyright Compliance from the Online Learning Office. (Please see the Appendix for membership and past minutes of the Library Committee and the Copyright Clearance Committee meetings.)

## Library Personnel and Evaluation

- 6.3 The library personnel have appropriate qualifications and expertise to support the mission of Holy Apostles College and Seminary. The table below lists the current library personnel, their specialization title, hiring status, and educational qualifications.

Name and Title	Full or Part time status	Degrees (all B.A. or above)
Clare Adamo / Director of Library Services	f/t professional/faculty (1 FTE)	MSLS Library Science MA Theology
Kristina Nowakowski / Catalog Librarian	p/t professional (.5 FTE)	LTA Library Science MLS Library Science
Gwen Pond / LTA Interlibrary Loan and Serials	p/t para-professional (.5 FTE)	B.A. LTA Library Science
Br. Robert Whitton, MSA / Assistant to the Library Director / Circulation Asst.	f/t clerical (1 FTE)	B.A.
8 student assistants	p/t clerical (1 FTE total)	BA. Upper class level or M.A. in progress

The library continues to remain open 7 days a week, 70 hours, for our students and faculty, as well as members of the surrounding community. Permanent library personnel maintain operations on site M-F weekday hours from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Upper classmen student assistants maintain the library circulation desk during the evening and weekend hours.

Covid-19 pandemic modification to library access:

It is noteworthy to discuss the modifications resulting from the HACS Library Covid-19 Pandemic policy (see *HACS Library Building Reopening Plans* in the Library Appendix). Although the library was closed to the general public, one full time resident library staff member maintained an open library building M-F 9-5, and 8 religious sisters continued to maintain evening and weekend library hours for our resident community. Professional and para-professional personnel worked remotely from March 16, 2020, thru Fall 2021. At that time, all personnel worked a combination of on-site and remote hours, which remains in force today. At all times, students and faculty could contact library personnel either via campus land lines, campus 3CX transmissions, or via email. The purchase of campus subscriptions to Zoom accounts enabled all primary library personnel to have an additional means of communicating with students and faculty. The Zoom accounts also facilitated weekly meeting between all library personnel who could log in either remotely or from their campus workstation.

To mediate the absence of a professional Librarian on-site evening and weekend hours and to better address our Online Learning Community, the Library began subscribing to the OCLC QuestionPoint 24/7 Reference Service in January of 2014. In 2019, OCLC QuestionPoint was purchased by Springshare, LLC and the 24/7 cooperative reference Service became known as LibChat 24/7. This online reference service allows all HACS students and faculty to open a live chat session for reference inquiries with a professional Librarian 24/7, including holidays. The LibChat box is located on the library website and has been integrated into our book catalog “splash” page as well as on our EBSCO database pages for additional access to professional assistance. (See also section 6.6 and Table A5 for statistics in the Library Appendix).

Opportunities for professional development between 2017-2021 were limited due to budget constraints. All personnel were encouraged to seek out and attend any free training upgrades offered by their particular system vendors. For example, our Catalog Librarian attended numerous online presentations offered by OCLC and AutoGraphics, Inc. Our LTA for Interlibrary Loan and Serials attended presentations offered by EBSCO for any pertinent upgrades to their serials system. On the positive side of the Covid-19 pandemic, from March 2020 to the present, numerous opportunities to attend virtual seminars and webinars became increasingly available. Our Director of Library Services attended virtual seminars on upgrades to the LibChat 24/7 Service as well as Professional development meetings with the Council of Connecticut Academic Library Directors (CCALD) group.

The most recent training session offered in April of 2022, was on library de-acquisitions. All Library personnel attended this virtual workshop. This seminar, “Weeding in the Garden of Good and Evil,” hosted by the CT. State Library, provided numerous useful insights on how to handle the physical constraints of full stacks noted in section 6.9 below. This training was especially important for our Catalog Librarian, who oversees the de-acquisition process and the accompanying Better World Books Services, and our Asst. to the Director/Circulation Asst., who supports this process administratively.

With continuous upgrades in library technology, increasing student requests for research services, the need for archival maintenance of our campus produced artifacts, and current personnel being responsible for multiple departmental activities, there is a pressing need to secure additional personnel hours. The Director of Library Services, in seeking a budget to include an augmentation in library personnel hours, is aware that this need is being addressed in the current HACS Strategic Plan.

- 6.4 Library and information services personnel are appropriately integrated into the school’s leadership, faculty, and decision-making structures, including budgeting and strategic planning processes at several levels. The Director of Library Services remains integrated into the academic decision-making functions of the campus with her presence on numerous campus-wide academic committees as noted in section 6.2. Between 2016 – 2019, the Director of Library Services was also a member of the both the strategic planning process and a co-chair of both the ATS and NECHE accreditation committees.

Additional professional and para-professional library personnel participate in campus wide library policy and resource decision making committees as noted also in section 6.2.

- 6.5 The Library Committee regularly evaluates the adequacy and use of services and resources to ensure that the information needs of our students and faculty are being appropriately met in relation to the school's educational mission, degree programs, and educational modalities. Services and resources are regularly evaluated in conjunction with our Collection Development Policy regarding new programs, new products and services, and new vendor relations. (See section 6.7 and 6.8) Three recent examples of these evaluations are listed below.

1. Our most recent graduate program addition at Holy Apostles is the online M.Div. in the New Evangelization. This 72-credit graduate program currently has sufficient library resources to support the program goals regarding coursework. It is the task of the Library Committee to seek further understanding of the unique Summative Evaluation Project to be required within the three-year program and to determine, along with the Graduate Faculty Committee and Program Director, any additional subject resources that may be required.

2. Summary of the results of *The Graduate Student Library Satisfaction Survey April 2022* (See Library Appendix). The library personnel, in conjunction with the Library Committee, created *The Graduate Student Library Satisfaction Survey April 2022* for graduate students regarding their experience with library services in general for their academic level. This 21-question survey was emailed directly from Populi to the 428 graduate students enrolled in this Spring 2022 semester on April 8, 2022. Students were told the survey would take less than 10 minutes and that it would close on April 22, 2022, after two weeks availability. It was composed of five sections with three sections highlighting specific areas for evaluation:

1. Graduate Status (1 question)
2. Awareness of Library Services (7 questions)
3. Awareness of Resources (4 questions)
4. Satisfaction with Library Services and Resources (6 Questions)
5. Comments or Suggestions (optional 3 questions)

Of the 428 surveys emailed out, 70 surveys were completed, yielding a 16.4% response rate. The overall results, summarized by our LTA for Interlibrary Loan and Serials, are included in our Library Appendix. It is good to note here that most students contributed to the comments and suggestion sections and offered many worthwhile remarks that will be considered by the Library Committee.

Overall, graduate students were please with access to the library staff and the available resources. Occasional frustration with online authentication was noted. Some of the more notable suggestions included the desire for regular/monthly zoom instructional/training sessions on database searching, locating scholarly journals, and citation formatting. In

addition, 40% of all graduate respondents noted they used the LibChat 24/7 service with 93% finding it between somewhat and very responsive to their research questions.

3. Summary of the results of the *Faculty Journal Survey Evaluation Fall 2020* (See Library Appendix). In November of 2020, the Library Committee created the *Library Journals Survey (December 2020)* for the purpose of assessing faculty use of and satisfaction with current library purchased journal content. Faculty were first asked to identify their teaching specialty or emphasis. This was followed by a listing of 110 journal titles that faculty were asked to evaluate based upon these 5 categories of criteria.

1. Importance for myself and students
2. Importance for my students
3. Importance for myself
4. Not familiar with title
5. Not important for my discipline

This survey was emailed to all on campus faculty (30 faculty) and online faculty (58 faculty) early December of 2020 with a final closing date of December 18, 2020. At the close of the survey, 10 individuals responded to the survey for a response rate of 11.3%. The overall results, summarized by our LTA for Interlibrary Loan and Serials, are included in our Library Appendix. Results of this survey were discussed at the January 2021 Library Committee meeting where members voted to replace several less used journals titles with more relevant ones to our current curriculum.

Another important finding brought to light was the ongoing need to harness campus IT to better enable our online community to directly access online journal subscriptions. This continues to be a driving goal and will hopefully be addressed with our newly hired IT service company, CMIT Solutions of Stamford.

Although the Library Committee felt that both of our surveys were short and concise, we had hoped for a greater degree of participation. We attributed this low return rate to a few possibilities that will be considered in creating and delivering future library evaluation surveys.

1. General survey exhaustion
2. The mechanism of delivery
3. General lack of interest
4. The timing of the survey
5. Survey reminder notice or phased mailing

## Library Services and Resources

- 6.6 The library offers services that enhance student learning and formation and partners with faculty in teaching, learning, and research. Librarians provide reference services, help users navigate research resources, teach information literacy skills, support the scholarly

and educational work of the school, and foster lifelong learning. These reference services are offered by our HACS library personnel Monday thru Friday 9:00 am to 4:30 pm (EST) via in person, telephone, and zoom meetings. Our LibChat Reference Service is available 24/7 all 365 days per year to continue to support our HACS community, in addition to our on-site reference hours. The LibChat service has proven to be extremely valuable to our students. (Please see LibChat 24/7 Reference Chat Sessions Statistics in Table A5 and the *HACS Library Handbook* in the Library Appendix).

Library Reference Services consist of assisting students with research projects by helping them:

- to locate materials in the Library OPAC
- to navigate their way through the online databases and eBook collection
- to assist with bibliographic format (Guidelines in Library Appendix)
- to advise on types of materials for their discipline
- to secure technology assistance
- to obtain inter-library loan materials

Information Literacy programs at Holy Apostles have occurred in several forms:

- New student in-person orientation at the beginning of on campus semesters
- Instruction integrated into course time at faculty request – usually subject specific
- Class instruction within the library setting at faculty request – usually subject specific
- Informal seminars offered at lunchtime or dinner-breaks
- Individual tutorials (within the library or via telephone or via zoom)
- Enrollment in 1 ORO Online Orientation for all new Populi students
- Enrollment in ENG 890 and ENG 891 for M.A. candidates (Personal tutorial with Director of Library Services required. See Table A4 in the Library Appendix)

To further enhance our faculty/librarian partnership in understanding how faculty might better support their student research efforts, HACS sponsored a 6-session, professional development workshop open to all our faculty in the summer of 2021 offered by nationally renowned, Prof. William Badke of Trinity Western University in B.C, Canada. Two of Prof. Badke's books were supplied to all faculty members, regardless of their attendance in live sessions. These two books were *Teaching Research Processes* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (2021) and *Research Strategies: Finding Your Way Through the Information Fog* 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (2021). Twenty-six (26) faculty members participated in *Teaching Research Processes Professional Development Workshop for Faculty* and gained professional enrichment in understanding:

- Their unique role in assisting their students to become skillful researchers
- How to integrate research more effectively within their class structure and assignments
- More ways to invite their students into their own discipline

To further support our graduate students, an additional 4-session workshop was offered exclusively to our graduate students by Prof. William Badke. The primary text, *Research Strategies: Finding Your Way Through the Information Fog* 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (2021) was offered by

EnRoute Books and Media, Inc. at a considerable discount. Twenty-three (23) graduate students participated in the *Advanced Research Skills Workshop for Graduate Students* and gained enhanced skills in:

- Understanding seminary academic literature
- Research design
- Search strategies using keyword and controlled vocabularies
- Keys to effective research writing

6.7 The library curates and organizes a coherent collection of resources sufficient in quantity, currency, and depth to support our school's courses and programs in accordance with the collection development policy outlined in section 6.8. Books and media, acquired through purchase or donations, are processed by our Catalog Librarian. Records are originally created, or copy cataloged via OCLC's Connexion Service, downloaded into our AutoGraphics, Inc. VERSO AGCat Client 4.04 and item records are subsequently attached. Please see the Library Appendix for the following supporting tables and documents.

- Table A2: Print and eBook Collection Size
- Table A3: M.A. Summative Evaluation Collections – Institutional Artifacts
- *HACS Library Policies and Procedures Manual*

In addition to book and media acquisitions, the HACS library is responsible for the acquisition and the subsequent archival cataloging, retention, and distribution of campus artifacts produced from the various graduate student Summative Evaluation Projects for the M.A. degrees. These activities involve continuous collaboration between all library personnel and various faculty committees and academic departments. Once cataloging of these artifacts is completed, the Director of Library Services will ensure that all final Projects will be added to the appropriate charts on the library website. The library personnel adhere to the requirements set forth in all three Summative Evaluation Guidelines. (See Library Appendix) as noted in 6.9.

6.8 Our Collection development policy supports the mission of Holy Apostles with continued emphasis placed on the acquisitions of materials in theology, philosophy, bioethical research, and the liberal arts. Library materials include print books, eBooks, periodicals, databases, Papal documents, Roman Curia documents, U.S. Bishops documents, and audio-visuals materials. Collection development has continued to shift more toward online, digital collections available to all modes of learning and available to all students and faculty on a 24/7 basis.

Our library Collection Development Policy is consistently used, regularly evaluated, and periodically updated in accordance with the current needs of the school. In following the guidelines of our Collection Development Policy, resources are purchased or leased in consideration of these six criteria of selection: (See Library Appendix for *HACS Library Policies and Procedures Manual*)

1. Sustainability
2. Currency of content

3. Permanent value
4. Quality of the content
5. Collection strength
6. Format

Our library access policy is also continuously used, regularly evaluated, and periodically updated in accordance with the current needs of the school. We extend full access to our physical and digital materials collection to all currently enrolled students, faculty, and staff. Access to all digital resources is offered to our HACS community via a campus patron ID/library barcode available through Populi accounts. We also extend access to our physical materials to our Alumni (with direct borrowing) and to the community at large (with inter-library loan borrowing). Please see Table A6 in the Library Appendix for interlibrary loan statistics.

In July of 2021, the library initiated a test launch of the on-line circulation check-out system. This on-line circulation system became fully implemented in the fall 2021 semester. Library personnel worked collaboratively to create a policy and our LTA for Interlibrary Loan and Serials created a training manual to support all personnel in the automated circulation process. Several levels of training took place for both permanent and temporary personnel to ensure adequate understanding and skill in the process. An online training video, posted on the circulation computer, and a print instructional binder, *HACS Library Online Circulation Instructions*, at the Circulation Desk, enabled all library personnel to follow step-by-step instructions for online check-out of library materials. (See the Library Appendix)

- 6.9 The library has always had a very lean materials budget which has been meticulously stretched to include the most significant resources for our academic and formation community without the redundancy of resources. The 2021-2022 library materials budget, for instance, totaled \$51,059 (See Library Appendix Table A7: Total Library Material Expenditures by ATS Reporting Year).

With the growing student numbers and expansion of graduate programs, it is the hope that augmenting of the budget for library personnel, services and resources will be included in the Strategic Plan. (See section 6.3 and Appendix *HACS Strategic Plan*)

With the ever-increasing availability of digital resources, in concert with our growing online student population, Table A8: Collection Expenditures by Resource Type from ATS Reporting Year, clearly presents library expenditures for our print and digital collections. Note the overall migration to increasing expenditures on digital resources since the 2018 reporting year. (See Library Appendix).

It should be noted that, although we have a limited budget for online resources, we also benefit from the State of Connecticut Digital Library known as ResearchIT CT. This digital library is available to all of our registered students, faculty and staff and contributes key databases that are very useful and utilized by our HACS community. (See

Library Appendix Table A9: Key Databases Available to HACS Community as Library Budget Item or through the CT. State Digital Library Budget).

Our print book collection is growing at a slow pace due to both physical constraints of full stacks as well as due to the growth in content of our leased eBook collection. Our leased eBook collection very clearly supports the varied topics pursued by our graduate students for their M.A. Theses, M.A. Professional Papers, and Post Master's Papers. Please see Table A2: Print and eBook Collection Size in the Library Appendix, as well as a listing of our Summative Evaluation Collections on the library webpage under [Special Collections & Archives \(Includes Summative Evaluation Collections\)](#).

- 6.10 The Holy Apostles College & Seminary Library was built in 1962. It consists of 6 rooms all on one level with exterior exits in each room. Our Rare Books/Special Collections area is located in the former projector room at a 2<sup>nd</sup> story level. Furniture modifications have been made consistently since 2017 allowing for more private study carrels. In September of 2018, the Friends of the Library purchased a new study carrel configuration to support three additional, private desks/study areas for \$955.45. These existing study areas were also improved with privacy partitions, a powered pole, and Tripp-lite battery backup supplies for laptop usage. Several areas of the library were designated as "Quite" rooms to foster concentration. The following areas of the physical building are currently receiving estimates for maintenance:

1. Replacement windows on the south side of the library building
2. Upgrading of the ladies restroom facility
3. Replacement of rugs beginning with the main staff/circulation/reference room

Our HACS library participates in several consortia groups to strengthen our reciprocal borrowing arrangements to enhance our interlibrary loan process. We are members of ATLA, CCALD, and the CT State RequestIT system and the C-Car interlibrary loan transporting service. It is noteworthy to see that our library has almost 2-3 times the number of interlibrary loan outgoing requests to other libraries than incoming requests since 2019. These Inter-library loan sharing statistics, 2018 -2021 ATS/ACRL reports can be found Table A6 in the Library Appendix.

## **ATS Standard 7—Student Services**

HACS has developed rapidly in the past five years. Overall enrollment growth has been substantial and has leaned even more heavily to online instruction. Data in other parts of this report demonstrate this trend. At the same time HACS has undergone an equally substantive development in its administrative structure, as well as professionalization of personnel. Recently Mr. Jason Gill was hired in a reconstituted position now titled, Executive Director of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs. Key retirements and other personnel changes have led to reimagining student services. At the same time, Mr. Gill is now a part of the Executive Committee of senior administrators who collectively have responsibility for all HACS operations. The centrality of this position is recognized in item one of HACS's strategic initiatives, "Systematically Promote and Market Holy Apostles College and Seminary Nationally and Internationally."

Holy Apostles offers undergraduate and graduate programs and courses in philosophy, theology, and pastoral studies in two modes of delivery. The latest addition to the online campus is the MDiv in the New Evangelization. All programs except for the Seminary's MDiv are offered 100% online. The Seminary's MDiv program is offered for seminarians only and is fully on-campus. All Theology Graduate programs are offered 100% for both modes of delivery whereas the other programs require some courses to be taken online. On campus, laypeople study, dine and pray alongside priests, seminarians, and religious sisters. Online, diverse communities from around the globe study together asynchronously. As Fr. Peter often says, "One program, two modes of delivery."

### **7.1 Recent reorganization of staff was meant to address student service personnel needs.**

Holy Apostles has 21 full-time and 10 part-time staff. The staff is properly sized to offer appropriate student service considering the school's modest enrollment.

Staff are supported and encouraged to take advantage of professional development and training opportunities, such as local conferences and professional webinars. Some staff roles require on-going training, such as the Veteran Affairs School Certifying Officials and SEVIS Designated School Officials needing to complete online training.

Populi Release Notes are shared by staff for other staff and faculty, and Populi also offers on-demand training videos and articles. Additionally, Populi encourages an easy to access 'User Forum' that allows staff at other schools to help support, trouble-shoot and share best practices with each other

HACS continues to offer OWL (Online Writing Lab) for our students that has a professor and Grad Student providing the service. We are currently looking into providing Tutors,

asking recently graduated Graduate students to take on this role in the areas of Theology, Philosophy and Pastoral Studies.

- 7.2 Robust social media presence on a variety of platforms provided and supported by our third-party website and marketing group, Catholic Support Services (CSS). Beginning in 2021, we hired CSS to develop more marketing strategies by enhancing our Search Engine Optimization (SEO) within our website and pursuing a planned approach to marketing the College instead of “one-off” advertising. Since the Pandemic, many colleges that didn’t have an online presence now do. Therefore, marketing is more critical than ever to keep ourselves in the forefront of Online Learning for these fields of Theology and Philosophy.
- Programs are offered to developing African countries via online courses to groups of students—i.e., five cohorts of students from Eritrea as well as one cohort of students from Tanzania. Preliminary courses of “American Educational Foundations for International Students” and “Advanced Academic Writing” are required to help assist students in the adoption of US academic norms and expectations.
  - HACS provides online graduate degrees to large groups of students in varying religious communities such as Maronites, Carmelites and other smaller groups of monks and Religious Sisters directly supporting the institution’s mission.
  - Additionally, program directors of the Theology, Philosophy, MAPS, and MDIV-NE programs make graduate admission decisions and take an active role in recruitment of prospective students, helping advise in vocational, professional, and academic considerations.
  - Future goals include reaching out to dioceses across the Country for diaconate coursework, Catechetical studies, etc.
  - The school fundamentally reorganized recruitment and admissions by adopting an Enrollment Management model which added a new Executive Director of Enrollment and Director of Admissions roles. This allows for a unified and cohesive recruitment strategy.
  - The on-campus student body, comprised primarily of seminarians and Religious Sisters, continues to be an international environment requiring a very active ESL program. The President-Rector and Vice-Rector head recruitment for the religious and seminarians through outreach to Vocations Directors and Religious Superiors.
  - Attachment 10, referenced earlier, samples documents now in regular use for tracking, evaluating, and decision-making regarding enrollment management activities and production. Attachment 26 documents the planning priorities for student services/enrollment management as part of the revisions to the strategic plan.
- 7.3 HACS recognizes that the typical Graduate student wants something very different from the typical Undergraduate student. The Admissions team is very familiar with counseling

Graduate students who have very specific goals and needs in mind. The average Graduate student has a full-time job and, often, a family. Their program needs to fit into this very busy life with, often, tangible outcomes. Many students, for instance, in our Bioethics track are in the medical profession or legal profession. They are looking for the Church's teachings on very difficult topics and how to practice in their professions while not compromising on their beliefs. We also have Graduate students who are retired and are looking to better understand their faith, having more time in their lives now to spend in such studies.

As of March 2022, graduate program directors were included in the admission review and decision-making process. This collaborative admissions process - in conjunction with the Director of Admissions - ensures applicants are reviewed in context to their specific degree.

7.4 Holy Apostles requires accredited Bachelor's degrees in order to enter into their Graduate Master's programs. On rare occasions students with 120+ credits from seminary education who never finished their degree will apply for admission to graduate studies. After careful evaluation some number of credits will be allowed to count towards a BA with HACS, thereby providing sufficient academic standing prior to enrollment in Graduate studies.

7.5 Recent program developments include, but are not limited to:

- A recent proposal was accepted that will extend the spiritual life of the seminary and college to our wider online community. The chapel will soon be outfitted with better audio and video recording hardware alongside a dedicated internet line which ensures streaming quality and reliability. With these new improvements, we hope to stream more chapel events that can help our wider community feel more connected and engaged in the life of the institution.
- As it is with our graduation ceremonies, we will now be streaming our opening mass for the academic year which immediately proceeds the Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity. This allows staff to attend and can be shared with new and current faculty and students who would like to witness the opening event of the academic year.
- Additionally, a weekly noon mass and daily evening prayer will be streamed allowing for the wider online community to worship together once a week and pray together daily.

7.6 The School provides a number of important documents to help students stay informed of their rights and responsibilities. This includes the Student Handbook and Academic Catalog. Together, these documents clarify the process for making formal Title IX and

Department of Education complaints. The Student Handbook also includes the Student Code of Conduct.

- 7.7 Student records which include admissions documentation and transcripts are all kept secure in our Populi database and Learning Management System. This is secured on an offsite Server maintained by Populi. Visibility of all materials is carefully controlled by Role settings within the Populi system. The College also maintains hard files in locked offices. Privacy is strictly controlled by blocking access to those who should not have it.

Further development of the office of the Registrar, including new personnel, has opened practice in these regards to be professionalized and modernized.

- 7.8 Financial aid management is shared between the Executive Director of Enrollment Management, Jason Gill and the Financial Aid Administrator, Debra Eddy. The school participates in the Pell Grant and Direct Loan programs. It leverages the integration of EdConnect to the SIS Populi system. The financial aid office annually fulfills the A-133 audit requirement and strives to ensure that all verification, reconciliation, cash management and other duties are completed correctly and on time. Recently the school adopted two practices to better served self-paying students. The first was to start accepting ACH or 'e-check' payments which have a lower transactional rate. The second was to formalize a payment plan for students where they could make four monthly payments over a semester, rather than having to pay the entire balance at the start of each term. Increasing financial access for our students is an extension of our mission, and we will continue to look for ways to make sure all students who want to attend can attend.
- 7.9 Holy Apostles has long told students that getting a degree without going into debt is a gift. And it's a gift that many of our graduating students still receive. In the 2021-22 the school had 960 students and only 126 of those students borrowed during that same year. Because of the school's commitment to a low tuition rate and the living costs saved by offering our programs online, many of our students that do borrow do so judiciously. Including graduate borrowers - who have access to extensive loan amounts - our average student borrower last year took out about \$5700. The school's graduates have an excellent track record in repayment rates. The official 3-year Cohort Default Rates (CDR) for the school are 2.4, 6.4, and 5.8 for the 2018, 2017, and 2016 years, respectively (as these are 3-year CDR rates, 2018 is the most recent year of reporting).
- 7.10-7.11 Founded as a seminary, with seminarians recommended and sponsored by the church, career paths were in many, if not most instances already defined—i.e., priests, etc. In recent times HACS has served far more non-seminary students, though the distribution between undergraduate and graduate student skews largely to an adult population. Given the priority of religious studies and philosophy the curriculum of HACS may be reasonably defined as leading to enrichment, rather than career.

Regardless, it is important for HACS to recognize the practical and career value of the education it provides. Thus, development of alumni tracking, and career development counseling will be critical to rounding out the full HACS experience. Steps in these directions, including work to be done in Advancement, are underway.

## **ATS Standard 8—Faculty**

The faculty of HACS can be divided into a relatively small cohort of full time and a much larger cohort of adjunct/part time faculty (see Attachment 21). The status of faculty, whether full time or otherwise, and whether fully graduate faculty or with split assignments is currently under review. It is the case that the vast majority of students are online, rather than in person on campus, and faculty for this population of students is sourced from around the world. What is key is that all faculty must adhere to the mission of HACS, as articulated in its identity, vision, and values.

- 8.1 The role of faculty in academic program development an evaluation is most recently evidenced in the new Master of Divinity in the New Evangelization. An extensive process of faculty engagement via regular and special meetings produced a new graduate degree program.

Other than this case, faculty meet regularly/monthly to both hear from administration on the status of the institution and relevant announcements or developments, as well as to discuss faculty specific contributions to the mission of the institution. In particular, the faculty did meet as HACS was undergoing a review of the institution's mission.

- 8.2 Given the distribution of students (on campus and online), and the preponderance of adjunct faculty, it is relatively easy to solicit and hire qualified faculty for any term schedule. Of late revised faculty policies have sought to broaden the reach of HACS to more qualified faculty, while limiting the number of courses any one faculty member, or administrator with faculty credentials, may teach. This was designed to elevate overall faculty quality in teaching and assessment (see Attachment 27).

Faculty rank and compensation are currently under review with an eye to establishing specific criteria for graduate faculty teaching load, etc. Current policy is available in the Faculty Handbook.

Demographic representation among the faculty is reasonable for a small institution, or perhaps even a strength. Given the ability of HACS to reach globally for faculty in its online programming it is sometimes easier to bring in diverse voices, not just demographically, but within the various Catholic traditions.

- 8.3 The faculty webpage (<https://holypostles.edu/faculty/>) lists faculty by credential and areas of teaching/responsibilities. All faculty teaching at the graduate level either possess the PhD or are evaluated as “highly qualified” via experience and education.

- 8.4 Faculty support, including compensation has been under review in the past year. Specific policies to this point are contained in the Faculty Handbook and revised Faculty Policies document. Some of the changes of late have been defined limitation regarding the number of courses that may be taught in a semester, scheduling of courses by term that either combine small enrollments or schedule alternating offerings. Further supporting faculty has been the hiring of a new VPAA and staffing of other senior academic affairs positions, as well as hiring of an instructional designer.
- 8.5 As noted elsewhere, the Faculty Handbook, as well as new Faculty Policies are either under review or have been implemented. This work is ongoing. The purpose of it is to ensure fair treatment of faculty while also ensuring the highest standards of teaching and scholarship. Specific procedures for hiring faculty are evidenced in the Handbook.
- 8.6 Because academic freedom is crucial to honest inquiry it is important to quote extensively from the Handbook on this item (Handbook item 3-Academic Freedom)

Faculty members have a right to academic freedom. This is a responsible freedom and is related to a serious concern for truth, and for an intelligent use of appropriate methods. Courses in Catholic theology and those who teach such courses are expected to accept willingly the authentic teachings of the Catholic Church.

The College and Seminary will endeavor to adhere to the Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom as set forth by the American Association of University Professors. But the Institution's mission and first commitment require that it ensure that what is taught as Catholic theology is in accord with the authentic teachings of the Catholic Church.

As an academic Institution commitment to the religious, ethical and intellectual traditions of Catholic higher educations, Holy Apostles College & Seminary carries out its teaching and all other activities in the light of Catholic ideals, principles and attitudes.

Precisely as an Institution of higher learning recognized as Catholic by ecclesiastical authority, the College and Seminary embraces the following characteristics, set forth in *Ex Corde Eccelsiae*, as essential to its Catholic identity:

- a. "a continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research

- b. Fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church
- c. An institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life” (No. 13).

- 8.7 With changes in Faculty Policies the processes for faculty development are under review. Monthly faculty meetings are being reviewed for how they may become more functional for faculty development on any number of criteria. As noted, an instructional designer has been recently hired, along with a new VPAA to bolster academic quality generally. This includes not only development opportunity for current faculty members, but also impacting how faculty are hired and with what criteria. The recent development of the Master of Divinity in the New Evangelization illustrates how this has progressed.
- 8.8 Faculty are sourced from a variety of geographic and cultural locations, as well as representing different roles within the Catholic Church and Catholic higher education generally. Faculty therefore come from both Connecticut as well as internationally, and represent clergy, laity, and academic faculty from other institutions as well as HACS. All faculty CV’s are available for review by the visiting team.
- 8.9 Given the small size of the full-time faculty, and significant reliance on adjunct/part time faculty scholarship is supported primarily by how faculty are hired and scheduled. Part of the reason for scholarship on the part of faculty is to model continued professional improvement for students. Having faculty who can demonstrate this in class is clearly important to outcomes for students. Other faculty scholarship support is currently under review with new leadership in academic affairs.
- 8.10 Given that faculty may come from the clergy, laity, or other academic appointments, in addition to HACS, then service to the mission manifests in a variety of ways. The details of this, however, are also under review within both the Handbook and Faculty Policies.
- 8.11 These elements are defined within the Faculty Handbook and new Faculty Policies.

Given the overlap of some Standard 8 details with other standards not all relevant attached documents have been replicated here. However, those most significant to this standard include, but are not limited to

- Attachment 3—Revised Mission Statement
- Attachment 8—Revised Strategic Plan
- Attachment 12—Institutional Research
- Attachment 13—Graduate Exit Survey
- Attachments 14.1 and 14.2—Academic Initiatives re: Strategic Plan

- Attachment 15—MA Program Assessment Grids
- Attachment 16—HACS Assessment Report
- Attachment 17—Graduate Curriculum Goals and Outcomes
- Attachment 18—Handbook for Faculty
- Attachment 19—Handbook for Online Instructors
- Attachments 23 and 24—MDiv/NE Handbook and Assessment
- Attachment 27—Academic Policies

## **ATS Standard 9—Governance and Administration**

November 1, 2021, HACS submitted an interim report to ATS focused primarily on governance. In that report many Standard 9 criteria were addressed and can be seen in Attachments 28.1 and 28.2. Much of what is reported below is work done since then. Nonetheless, it is appropriate to briefly summarize.

Since the appointment of Fr. Peter Kucer as President/Rector in 2019 substantial challenges and changes have been in the works at HACS. Fortunately, the pandemic had somewhat less impact on HACS than it did for many institutions, as HACS has been delivering academic programs online far longer than most. This is not to say there were no impacts, but only to indicate that HACS was better positioned to weather the storm than many. HACS also benefited from CARES Act grants, allowing it to upgrade services and technology in meaningful ways.

However, it is fair to say that HACS governance and administration has operated along two principles: 1) informally with regard to structure and responsibilities, and 2) focusing on the short term or urgent, rather than planning strategically. While there was indeed a strategic plan approved in 2020, with a widely agreed upon mission statement, in some respects these were not fully operationalized.

More recently HACS has worked diligently, and productively to implement “best practices” for governance and administration, becoming more professional and formal in needed ways, while maintaining its essential care for the relationships that are at the heart of the institution. This has led to restructuring of Board of Directors (BOD) and Administration responsibilities, administrative reorganization, hiring and searches for key personnel, and an emphasis on planning. Both a new mission statement (Attachment 3) and strategic plan (Attachment 8) are products of these efforts.

- 9.1 HACS is Sponsored by the Missionaries of the Holy Apostles (MSA). 5 MSA members comprise the Membership Corporation and is chaired by the Provincial Animator of the MSA. Members of this Corporation are tasked with maintaining and protecting the charism of the MSA society at HACS, to serve as members of the HACS Board of Directors, to approve the purchase, sale and fundamental alteration or change of property owned by the Society and leased to the College and Seminary. The Board of Directors governs Holy Apostles College and Seminary by monitoring and approving policies and procedures, monitoring the implementation of recommendations of visitation and accreditation teams, awarding degrees, approving academic programs, approving academic planning, general supervision of development, administration, and management.
- 9.2 The BOD is clearly transitioning from the more informal advisory role to that of governance, with fiduciary responsibilities. The survey work implemented by BOD Chair Fr. Martin Rooney is one such step in this process (see Attachment 28.2-Item D).

Currently the BOD is in process of recruiting and seating new members. In its focus on governance new members are being sought from new sources, expanding the pool for those best qualified, and driven by the HACS mission. Board experience, in particular board committee work experience, as well as diversity in experience are priorities. Attachment 29 lists BOD members as of August 18, 2022. Compared to the November 2021 Interim Report listing (see Attachment 28.2-Item C), it is evident BOD composition and development is underway.

- 9.3 The BOD's roles, responsibilities, composition, etc., are under review, as part of the BOD's expansion and self-assessment, already begun. This includes not only routine BOD matters, but also full review of by-laws (see Attachment 30). This, of course, is a long-term project, and will be a continuing focus of the BOD. Nonetheless, the BOD has already approved both mission and strategic initiatives statements and will be approving a new strategic plan for implementation in January 2023.
- 9.4 The ongoing revision of by-laws and the introduction of new members with diverse experiences and potential for contribution is serving to remake the BOD. Plans are underway for the transformation of the BOD with additions to the board for greater diversity and depth, development of the committee structure, and for the BOD to be led as chair in the near future by a lay member, rather than the Chancellor, as is presently the case. An example, Sister Thomas More Stepnowski, O.P., former Vice President of Academics at Aquinas College, and Mr. Jeffrey M. Nelson, Vice President of Noble Environment Power-Cogentrix, have recently been added to the board. It is anticipated that a lay member will chair the BOD at the December 2022 BOD meeting. All of this is part of formalizing the BOD as a governance entity, rather than as advisory. According to ATS and NECHE standards it was important to ensure no conflicts of interest, especially regarding any BOD members receiving compensation for their work. That is now being resolved to the levels compatible with standard practices.

In this restructuring there is emerging a new relationship between the BOD and the President/Rector. While there is a formal relationship defined in the by-laws, it is important that the President/Rector have and appropriate, yet fulsome working relationship. The details of this are clearly emergent at present, but the work of the BOD Chair and President/Rector in shepherding the new mission and strategic initiatives documents, both throughout the HACS organization, as well as through the BOD and the MSA demonstrate an affirmative understanding of respective roles.

- 9.5 It is important to quote somewhat extensively from the ATS interim report noted above and in Attachment 28.1. The relevant part of that report indicates BOD self-awareness, including noted responsibilities and intended directions for BOD action:

To this end the BOD has begun, in earnest, to fully evaluate itself, and its primary responsibility in hiring the President/Rector. As a fundamental step the BOD has undertaken an initial survey (Attachment 28.2-Item D of the interim report) to assess its members individually and collectively as a board. This assessment is setting the stage for BOD development in the coming months. The following quotation summary from the BOD Chancellor/Chair perhaps communicates best the intent and effects of the survey results:

Although the Board by-laws have always presented the Board as a governance Board, it never acted as such. This survey provided the Board opportunity to evaluate themselves as a Board, assess their knowledge of Holy Apostles College & Seminary, and provided opportunity to offer suggestions for moving forward. After receiving the results of this evaluation, the new Board Chair has made the following observations:

To bring in someone to help the HAC&S Board understand their role as Board members in the areas following:

- Fiduciary
- Leadership & Governance (oversight)
- Knowledge of the Mission of HAC&S
- Strategic Planning
- Accreditation
- Recruitment of new Board Members
- Orientation for all Board members.

To redevelop the Board Committees and members

To update the By-Laws of HAC&S to reflect changes that have taken place.

After receiving recent NECHE and ATS reports it was necessary for the Board to start asking tough questions about why there were the same ‘notices’ year after year. Along with the President/Rector the Board started to ask who we (the Board) would hold responsible if these notices of concern continued.

Self-awareness is an important factor in BOD development going forward. One aspect of that, and a most important step, has been initiated by the current President/Rector to insure evaluation of his own performance. This proposal-- Yearly Assessment of HACS President Rector—squarely puts responsibility on the BOD for insuring adherence to

HACS objectives. While some college/university presidents still resist such evaluative processes, the current President/Rector is demonstrating substantial leadership in this regard.

Most recently Chancellor and BOD Chair, Fr. Martin Rooney, has outlined additional steps in development of governance structure and processes. These are noted as follows:

1. Change in the composition of the Board with new members for September 2022 meeting.
2. By-Laws updated as much as possible
3. Committee structure and expectations updated
4. Professional development for BOD members, as well as new member orientation
5. A focus on Budgeting and Fundraising
6. A review of the revised statements on Identity, Mission, Vision, Values and Strategic Initiatives already approved at the April BOD meeting.

#### 9.6-9.7-9.8

The concept of shared governance is not new to HACS, nor to the MSA community. It is, however, the case that such evidence of shared governance have largely been embedded within the informal ways of the HACS organization for much of the previous forty years. It is for this reason, primarily, that the concept of shared governance ranging from the BOD to the rest of the institution is less developed than shared governance within the organization. Under Fr. Kucer's leadership a wide array of committees, general meetings, and other communication forums have arisen to ensure dissemination of essential, as well as community information.

Instances of these, across the institution include, but are not limited to the newly established Executive Committee, all staff meetings—both in person and remotely—to update HACS personnel on status, initiatives, changes, etc., and various faculty chaired meetings regarding academic affairs such as learning outcomes/assessment, etc. It is reasonable to view these as still emergent actions within HACS, but substantive, nonetheless.

It must be noted, however, that the small size of HACS, and the proximity of MSA members to campus, both informally and as employees in various capacities, means there is a quite lively ecology of exchange. There is little to no structural barriers to access to persons, especially when community meals are daily shared in common. This is a strength of HACS on the plane of relationships.

- 9.9 It is reasonable to say that while much has been achieved by the administration of HACS, and under trying circumstances, that the administration is flux. This is not unique to HACS, as it is a condition across all of higher education. By bringing in outside expertise

in the past year, Fr. Kucer has invested in building administrative capacity. By careful management of new hires and strategic retirements, more expertise is now invested in critical roles, such as enrollment management. Nonetheless, there are and have been some challenges, particularly regarding the Chief Academic Officer's position.

To this last point, the hiring of Dr. Lesley DeNardis in July 2022 is both a substantial affirmative step. It is also an indicator of what has transpired in Academic Affairs in finding the right person for this position with enhanced power and responsibilities. In the Summer of 2021 the sitting Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Cynthia Toolin-Wilson stepped into a new role for Institutional Research. She was followed by appointments of Dr. Andrew Blaski and Mr. Steven Schultz. While both were capable it was recognized that more experience was desired, and that Dr Blaski and Mr. Schultz were better fitted to other roles. All of this led to the hiring of Dr. DeNardis in a revised role of VPAA. In sum, this was the fourth CAO in approximately one year.

Experience all across higher education evidence "churn" in senior administrative positions. That in of itself is not necessarily problematic for HACS, especially considering the other substantial changes and revisions across the institution. However, it does argue for, or explain the slower pace of work on some issues noted by ATS. Nonetheless, in hiring Dr. DeNardis, HACS begun to settle the critical position of VPAA and provide needed leadership to faculty and the academic program.

Looking forward, other critical positions will need to be, and are in the process of being resolved. The very experienced CFO is looking to step down after many years of productive service. There are continuing needs in fund raising, and in administrative assistance. All of these are known by the President/Rector, and searches are underway. At the same time, talented personnel in various roles, some of them new, are still learning the best ways to coordinate and communicate. In light of all this, HACS administration is remarkably productive, with an eye towards building better capacity in the near term. Special note needs to be given to the role played by the VP for Administration, Dr. Thomas Sabbagh. His experienced and steady hand across all facets of higher education has contributed substantially, formally and informally, to the redevelopment of HACS.

## **ATS Standard 10—Institutional Resources**

Throughout the 2021 and 2022 calendar years HACS has been engaged in historic and substantive organizational change. Focusing on the implementation of “best practices,” no part of HACS operations, processes, or personnel has been exempt. Led by the vision of President/Rector Fr. Peter Kucer, HACS has moved rapidly from an organizational culture, in place for decades, that was characterized by informality and reliance on traditional relationships. Fr. Kucer has often referred to this as a “mom and pop” organization. While there are obvious elements of personal attention that such a culture fosters, and that which HACS does not want to abandon, it has been imperative that a more professional orientation is warranted. As Fr. Rooney indicated in the BOD Chairman’s report of November 2021 to ATS, “...it was necessary for the Board to start asking tough questions about why there were the same ‘notices’ year after year.” The following quite clearly demonstrates significant steps in bringing this vision to fruition.

- 10.1 It is fair to say that personnel, including hiring as well as assignments or reassignments have been a priority. This is evidenced in the roster of positions and personnel changes cited at the start of this report and is recognized in the revised HACS organizational chart (see Attachment 5). Along with these have been revised job descriptions and implementation of annual reviews. But it is not just positions. The roles must integrate and work together.

Recognizing this, President/Rector Fr. Kucer has required that all changes be a result of carefully organized committee-work (and task force) planning. Those committee meetings have been instrumental in providing the President/Rector with recommendations that can be acted upon administratively or taken to the Board of Directors (BOD) for approval as necessary. Committees and task forces are required to meet regularly, keep minute notes, and set timely goals. Examples of some of this work include, but are not limited to:

- Recent work to revise the institutional mission.
- A Fiscal Sustainability Task Force charge with making recommendations regarding the setting of tuition and fees, with a special focus on the Seminary.
- An Accreditation Planning Committee for calendar year 2022 site visits by both ATS and NECHE.
- Academic Affairs Policy Committee to review faculty work expectations both online and in person, graduate and undergraduate, as well as workload.
- Human Resource Committee.
- Budget Planning Committee.

- 10.2 HACS has policies that are published and followed. Policies include Academic Policies and Procedures, Board of Directors Handbook, Drug Alcohol Policy, Handbook for Administrators, Handbook for Faculty, Handbook for Staff, Handbook for Online Instructors, Handbook for Online Students, Handbook for Persons with Disabilities,

Handbook for Religious Sisters, Handbook for Seminarians, Holy Apostles Library Handbook.

The Human Resource committee has overall responsibility for updating the staff manual, implementing a performance evaluation tool (see Attachment 31), and evaluating the overall performance operations of the department. This also include a review of any new HR policies related to diversity, inclusion, Title IX, sexual harassment, and other local, state and federal mandates as well as on-boarding practices and separation practices.

10.3 Fiscal data submissions to ATS and NECHE within the 2022 calendar year, including the past two years of audits (2020, and 2021), and the latest audit for fiscal year 2022 (see Attachment 32 for audits—please note that the 2022 audit submitted with this report is a DRAFT. all indicate a substantially improving circumstance for HACS. Highlights as reported by the CFO include, but are not limited to:

- Each category of tuition income increased, with the largest gain in the online program. The net online tuition for the fiscal year increased by over \$200,000.00 or 6.7%. Total revenue will exceed the previous fiscal year by slightly more than \$3,000,000.00. Note that these figures are also impacted by the following points regarding major gifts and market losses.
- HACS was the beneficiary of two estates, one valued at \$135,000.00 and the other, \$2,500,000.00. The School has begun an aggressive development program including the hiring of a dedicated grant writer, but the results of these efforts will not be realized until subsequent fiscal years. As noted above, a search is underway for a development officer.
- HACS, like most institutions, has been at the mercy of the financial markets for the last half of the fiscal year. HACS and its money managers understand that the School is not a trading institution, but an investing institution and markets will have down times. For the current fiscal year, the investment pool unrealized gain was more than \$2,000,000.00 compared to the previous year's gain of \$1,750,000.00. Holy Apostles has been reluctant to use funds from the investment pool, and in this fiscal year, only used \$300,000.00 which was less than 50% of realized gains and earned income. At this writing, the pool has already recouped more than \$400,000.00 of the unrealized loss. We remain in close contact with our financial advisors.
- The School has made more \$100,000.00 in major renovations/improvements to its facilities. The School continues to remain debt free.
- The program to require new full-time students studying on campus to contribute 50% of their tuitions is progressing.

Under the joint leadership of the CFO/William Russell and the VP for Administration/Dr. Thomas Sabbagh, new budgeting development (see Attachment 6) and administration processes are being implemented. These are designed to provide more information to budget managers for both planning and evaluation purposes, as well as allowing the institution to better track its fiscal status throughout the year. Related to this is the current development of a key indicators dashboard (see Attachment 9) for routine monitoring of essential HACS functions. Eventually a more long-term fact book is in the works via collaboration among various offices including the CFO, VP for Administration, Enrollment Management, Grants, and Institutional Research.

- 10.4 As noted previously, both the CFO and the VP for Administration are working collaboratively to develop new budgeting and budget administration processes. Key to this is a better flow of data among the various departments/offices of the organization. To this end, for example, work has been underway to insure common definitions, for example, in enrollment for purposes of various annual reports to ATS, NECHE, IPEDS, and marketing/recruitment outlets, such as US News ranking programs. Facilitating this has been active professional development of IR via the Association of Institutional Research (see Attachment 12).

Particular attention has been given to institutional sustainability via the Fiscal Sustainability Task Force. Until recently seminarian students were fully scholar-shipped for all tuition, room and board, and other fees. This has now been revised to begin providing income to HACS (see Attachment 7).

At the same time, the new Director for Enrollment Management has begun exploring alternative payment plans in order to make it easier for students to stay current in billing, as well as the potential for scholarship models. Supporting this has been work by the new grant writer to research and solicit foundations favorable to HACS for development of scholarship funds, whether annual or endowed. (see Attachments 11.1 and 11.2 regarding grants)

- 10.5 See 10.3 for investment fund information. Documentation will be provided on site to visiting team members.
- 10.6 While HACS has managed to benefit from fundraising over the years, it is also fair to say that the efforts need more organization and direction. To this end, it is a priority for HACS to hire in development, at least part time, in order to better manage the efforts of Fr. Kucer and other administrators. Grant writing has been brought on board in 2022 to better organize this part of fund raising.
- 10.7 It is clear from the audits provided that HACS has been managing its fiscal affairs. It is also the case that modernizing these has become a priority—this the cooperative work between the CFO and VP for Administration that is ongoing. It is also clear that other

offices must and are now being more closely connected to such management, such as Enrollment Management and Institutional Research. The purpose is to better and more clearly communicate institutional status in areas such as enrollment and revenues, as well as budget development and management.

It is very important to note that Mr. William Russell, CFO, will be retiring in the Fall of 2022. Mr. Russell's work on behalf of HACS, primarily in volunteer service, has been remarkable. At the same time, his availability to the day to day of management is limited, while at the same time the requirements of the CFO only grow. Finding the best fit replacement for Mr. Russell is a priority.

- 10.8 HACS is a small institution with a relatively small physical plant footprint. Given that 80%-90% of students study online then the need for campus facilities is correspondingly smaller. Nonetheless, there are a number of older facilities in need of continuous attention and improvement. The director of facilities has prepared a report (see Attachment 33) noting current conditions and plans going forward.
- 10.9 Under the direction of the VP for Administration HACS has revamped its IT services, including procuring new hardware as well as services. HACS is a member in good standing with the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA—see Attachment 34). It is fair to say that training, whether in hardware, programs, services, etc., is something that needs attention. Regardless, HACS has been engaged in digital delivery of academic programs for far longer than most institutions, and has excellent experience in this regard. This, along with improvements made regarding new IT services is serving HACS well. (Details regarding hardware, software, and other services will be made available to the visiting team on site.)
- 10.10 Shared resources occur primarily between the MSA and HACS. Work has happened and is ongoing regarding better documentation of property ownership and related obligations. It is clear that the MSA and HACS both benefit from the relationship. But it is also clear that the legal nuances of that relationship must be better defined. By the time of the team visit these details will be clarified.

### **Concluding Remarks**

HACS has clearly heard from ATS the necessity of addressing critical accreditation matters. This is evidenced in the substantial organizational and personnel changes made in just the last year. Of course, not all changes are at the same level of development, and it is reasonable to identify HACS as emerging into a more formal and professional institution.

The strengths of recent changes can be identified as,

- New organizational structure
- New professional and experienced personnel
- Revision and development of a new mission statement
- Development of a new strategic plan
- Strengthening of the institution's fiscal condition and budget planning process
- Revision of the Board of Directors function and structure and its relationship to administration

Those areas in which more work is to be done relate to

- Student learning outcomes
- Academic program review.

It must be said, however, that the leadership in these areas are well aware of what needs to be done and have already begun the process of addressing them.

Taken together, HACS has made tremendous strides and all indications are that these are durable. The commitment of the BOD and senior administration gives confidence to this assessment.