

**Report to the  
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students**

**of**

**INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESTORATIVE PRACTICES  
Bethlehem, PA**

**by**

**A Team Representing the  
Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

**Prepared After a Visit to  
the Campus on February 6-8, 2016**

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At the time of the visit:

President: John Baile, Ph.D.

Board Chair: William Ballantine, 38 Ervin Road, Pipersville, PA 18947

Members of the community interviewed:

John W. Bailie, Ph.D., President  
William Ballantine, Chair of the Board of Trustees  
Henry L. McClendon, Jr., Vice Chair  
Muriel Berkeley, Ph.D., Trustee  
Zvi Gabbay, Esq., J.S.D., Trustee  
Vidia Negrea, Trustee  
Stacey Miller, Ed.D., Trustee  
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## **I. Context and Nature of the Visit**

The mission of the International Institute for Restorative Practices is to strengthen civil society worldwide by educating community leaders and practitioners, and by supporting research in the growing field of restorative practices. Based in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the Institute is an independent, nonprofit, stand-alone institution with two small graduate programs: a Master of Science in Restorative Practices and a Graduate Certificate in addition to sizeable enrollment in continuing education. All programs serve adult learners in professions like education, justice, social services, counseling, organizational leadership, and faith communities.

The Institute is the world's first graduate school devoted entirely to the teaching, research, and implementation of the emerging discipline of restorative practices. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Education granted a Certificate of Authority to operate as a degree granting institution in June, 2006, and the IIRP was granted accreditation by the Middle States Commission in June, 2011.

The Institute's origins go back to the 1970s. Faced with growing problems in student achievement and discipline in American schools and communities, two visionary public school teachers, Susan and Ted Wachtel, created youth-serving agencies, the Community Service Foundation and, later, Buxmont Academy (CSF Buxmont), which provide research-supported strategies for reintegrating delinquent and at-risk young people into the community. More than three decades later, both agencies serve youth in eastern Pennsylvania through day treatment, education, counseling, and residential services—and the best serve as model programs for the Graduate School. These entities do not provide educational services for the Graduate School, but Buxmont and its assets, which are controlled by the IIRP, provide facilities, staff and financial backing.

In the 1990s, the CSF Buxmont staff, as well as like-minded scholars and practitioners, embraced a criminal justice innovation called “restorative justice.” Restorative justice methods like *restorative conferences* and *restorative circles* seek to repair the interpersonal harm caused by a crime rather than punish or incarcerate. During the years that followed, parallel developments in social work, education, and organizational management brought new insights. The IIRP leaders and others began to integrate applied group dynamics and community-building methods into a new restorative practices theory of intervention.

Shortly after its creation, the Institute faced a decline in credit-bearing enrollment in 2010-11 like other graduate schools of education. In 2012-13 the Graduate School reorganized itself from two master's degrees via traditional classrooms to a single hybrid Master of Science degree, which is delivered through face-to-face and online learning (in addition to the Certificate and continuing education). The IIRP was approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to offer a Master of Science in Restorative Practices. At this time, the IIRP has no branch campuses or additional locations.

As a newly accredited institution, after five years the Institute is required to use the comprehensive model for self-study, and its Self-Study Report responds to the 14 standards in the *Characteristics of Excellence* (MSCHE, 2006). The self-study was the product of community-wide collaboration, which defines so much of the Institute's distinctive organizational culture.

## **II. Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Requirements of Affiliation**

Based on a review of the self-study, interviews, the Certification Statement supplied by the institution and/or other institutional documents, the team affirms that the institution continues to meet the Requirements of Affiliation in *Characteristics of Excellence*.

## **III. Compliance with Federal Requirements; Issues Relative to State Regulatory or Other Accrediting Agency Requirements**

Based on the separate verification of compliance with accreditation-relevant provisions of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 and, as necessary, review of the Self-Study Report, certification by the institution, other institutional documents, and/or interviews, the team affirms that the institution meets all relevant federal and state regulations and the requirements of other Department of Education recognized accreditors.

The compliance reviewer's report is attached.

## **IV. Evaluation Overview**

The International Institute for Restorative Practices, having an estimable mission and engaging collaborative ethos, is an innovative institution at a pivotal time in its history. Just a few years after receiving accreditation, it had to weather the economic downturn of 2009-2010, which hit programs especially hard that serve teachers. Like so much of their work, this small community practiced what they preached and managed a difficult transition with transparency and remarkable cooperation, an accomplishment for which the staff and faculty are justly proud.

Current enrollment and financial metrics point to another transition for this young and vibrant institution—how to manage growth in the graduate program that could challenge the norms and structures of what has been until now a small community. The Institute is nothing if not enthusiastic about what it has to offer stressed communities and, if the leadership is right about the great need, here and abroad, demand for services and programs could expand quickly.

Managing the ramp up could prove just as challenging as managing contraction because most facets of the organization and its maturing academic culture will be touched: composition and functions of the board, how authority and decisions are managed in the administration, faculty life and new appointments, academic quality controls, how to finance needed investments, and how to build the infrastructure in IT or student services before both systems become stressed by growth.

The International Institute for Restorative Practices is commended for its transparent, collaborative governance as well as its openness to learning about the requirements made of a nascent institution of higher learning. The administration, faculty and staff practice what they teach, integrating the values and methods of restorative practices, broadly and deeply, in operations, educational programs and assessment. At the same time, the Institute's two graduate academic programs to train leaders are small and feature a hybrid platform that may be new to some students and faculty members. The community also wants to be known internationally as the intellectual home of restorative practices worldwide. For all these worthy aspirations, the team's recommendation is to update the strategic plan to strengthen the academic culture and to prepare for enrollment growth if its ambitions are realized.

## **V-- Compliance with Accreditation Standards**

### **Standard 1 – Mission and Goals**

*The institution's mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and indicates whom the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. The mission and goals are developed and recognized by the institution with the participation of its members and its governing body and are utilized to develop and shape its programs and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness.*

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

### **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

The mission focuses on the emerging discipline of restorative practices, a vision that is reflected not only in educational programs and faculty research, but also in strategic planning, institutional processes, and assessment. Perhaps the strongest evidence of the mission's centrality was the use of restorative practices to reformulate the educational programs when confronting concerns about the graduate program's long-term financial sustainability. The Mission Exercises and the Trustee Survey (electronic version included in the Additional Documents) demonstrated high awareness and integration of the mission into all aspects of operations and programs. Through work nationally and internationally, the IIRP faculty and staff are shaping the field of restorative practices, as evidenced by the essay defining restorative practices by the founding president.

Three institutional goals have been derived from the mission, and portions of these goals are linked to goals for institutional learning, program, and courses. However, about half of respondents reported only being "somewhat" clear regarding how the institution's mission guides resource planning and allocation (Trustees' Results of Survey Regarding Mission, 10-26-14).

Finally, certain elements of the Institute's ambitious goals are less well operationalized: strengthening civil society, contribution to the growth of knowledge through research, and positively influencing human behavior.

## **Commendation**

The faculty and staff of the IIRP practice what they teach, resulting in an organizational culture that is open and fair. The thorough integration of the mission of applying restorative practices in operations, educational programs and assessment is commended.

## **Suggestion**

1. The trustees and administration should consider developing a framework for how the mission informs resource allocation and communicate it to the community.

## **Standard 2 – Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal**

*An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.*

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

## **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

Planning at the IIRP is continuous and systematic through the Committee of the Whole (COW) and Biannual Budget, Planning and Assessment Day. Participation of faculty and administrators occurs in both groups. An ongoing commitment to planning and institutional renewal is evidenced by the Assessment Committee that creates an annual Summary of Academic and Administrative Outcomes report, which then is reviewed by COW, the President, and the Trustees. Results of the annual reports are used in planning and assessment to maintain, support, and improve programs and services.

The budget process is well defined and highly collaborative. The Committee of the Whole leads an integrated cycle of budgeting, planning, and assessment, leading to a well-organized decision process.

All administrative units create unit plans with measurable objectives aligned to strategic goals. The Biannual Budget, Planning, and Assessment Day communicates institutional priorities among unit leaders and faculty, also fostering a cooperative ethos. An assessment committee provides documentation to track outcomes on student learning, suggestions for improvement in planning, budgeting, or assessment. Results are communicated through the COW to the President and the Board of Trustees.

The *Strategic Plan 2015-2020* is linked to mission and goals, being used for planning and resource allocation. Academic planning is informed by academic program and unit reviews, and the institution has used this data to change and improve the delivery and content of its academic programs.

Enrollment growth is projected. While an enrollment plan was found, it relies heavily on recruiting attendees at professional development events. The goals need to be closely monitored so appropriate marketing initiatives can be implemented, if needed.

Finally, *Strategic Plan 2015-2020* includes five goals with objectives to identify activities, actions, evidence, deadlines, responsible staff, and expected additional expenses. The Institute has a multi-year budget, but consideration should be given to future expenses that would be caused in response to growth such as new positions and technology improvements.

### **Accomplishments**

A collaborative, transparent planning process helps the institution manage efficiently, maintain fiscal control, improve services and processes, and allocate resources. It is a forum for direct democracy, made feasible by the institution's small size.

### **Suggestions**

As the strategic plan is revised, institutional data should be connected with strategic indicators as well as suggestions and recommendations made in the self-study.

### **Recommendation**

The strategic plan needs updating to improve support for faculty research and to define the path to growth that will require improved infrastructure in information technology, 24/7 technical support of online study, student services like tutoring, and the library.

## **Standard 3 – Institutional Resources**

*The human, financial, technical, facilities, and other resources necessary to achieve an institution's mission and goals are available and accessible. In the context of the institution's mission, the effective and efficient uses of the institution's resources are analyzed as part of ongoing outcomes assessment.*

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

### **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

Financial resources and operating performance have been improving and are maintaining the desired balance sheet ratios. The Committee of the Whole makes final most resource allocation decisions with collective input from faculty, staff, and administrators. This established process allows for direct involvement of stakeholders. Periodic assessment of the use of institutional resources is done by the Director of Finance. The administration has detailed plans for enrollment, facilities, staffing, library, technology, administrative services/support services, continuing education, and advancement. A forward

looking financial plan shows continued financial improvements, including goals for enrollment growth and a greater contribution from the graduate program.

The Institute has common control and an economic interest in the Restorative Practices Foundation and Buxmont Academy. The common control comes from a majority voting interest on the boards of the Foundation and the Academy. The economic interest comes from the Institute providing administrative and support services to both. Employees and facilities are also shared between the organizations. While the Institute has not received direct contributions from the Academy since 2013-14, the resources of the Academy provide additional financial support if needed. Buxmont Academy had \$2.3M in cash on June 20, 2015 and an unused \$700,000 line of credit.

### **Accomplishments**

All decision making processes allocating institutional resources are connected to the strategic plan and annual budget process. The IIRP adjusted its financial plan to address the rapidly changing market conditions and financial situation of 2009-10. Continuing Education revenue and receivables in the general ledger are maintained on an accrual basis.

The Director of Finance reviews financials monthly, bringing any deviations from the approved budget to the attention of the unit director, respective vice president, and president. The administration added a marketing associate to provide marketing and promotional support for the increasing number of professional development events and they added a staff person to manage the increasing number of Whole-School Change contracts.

Surveys offer formal evidence that the budget and administration provide sufficient support to assure that the library meets its goals. A replacement plan and schedule for technology is in place.

### **Suggestions**

1. The team endorses the administration's goal to continue reviewing ways to improve the integration of information systems and to increase overall effectiveness and efficiency.
2. Recent audits include a management letter comment about internal financial controls. The Institute needs to evaluate this matter and address it.
3. The financial aid practice of discounts for classes in the graduate program needs to be evaluated to determine if this is still prudent or if class pricing needs to be adjusted.

### **Standard 4 – Leadership and Governance**

*The institution's system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution.*



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

### **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

Inspection of governance documents provided to the team and interviews with all constituencies demonstrate that the Institute, to an uncommon degree, embodies the ideals of shared governance. The roles of trustees, senior administrators and faculty—all are defined in formal policies provided to the team.

The organizational climate is highly collaborative inside a flat organizational model, one that has encouraged a nimble entrepreneurial spirit. The IIRP has a board of eleven trustees who are selected by a formal process, and the team found the current makeup to be diverse with respect to skill sets, nationality, and race. For an institution so young, its international makeup is remarkable and the team witnessed this capacity in a video conference held with the IIRP trustees: local trustees and a member each from the Netherlands, Israel, Hungary (for Central and Eastern Europe) and Costa Rica. To suggest the international reach of the IIRP, Costa Rica alone has some 43 certified trainers who are introducing restorative practices, broadly defined, in Central and South America.

All trustees had read the self-study, understood the purpose of the team visit, and understand the role of the board with respect to the president and his administration, and the potential challenge of managing organizational change and growth.

The Institute has an energetic new president, promoted from within who had led the successful continuing education initiative. An organized transition is unfolding between the founding president and his successor, the result of advance planning, and candid dialogue. The board and the senior administration speak openly to this normally sensitive topic. While the new president is not new to the IIRP, it is his first year in a demanding role, one that must evaluate and manage many different opportunities for growth. He is participating in off-campus mentoring, which the team supports.

Conversations with senior leaders point to a gradual evolution of campus leadership and organizational structures. The new president, who embraces restorative values and norms, is encouraging decentralization and the delegation of authority, which sets the foundation for a variegated administration that may be needed, if the institution grows at the rate expected. The team hopes this change will be managed with the signature transparency and collaboration of other institutional changes.

Conversations between the team and local and international trustees in a video conference focused on managing organizational transitions and the responsibilities of the board for both *financial stewardship* as well as *intellectual stewardship*, given the vision that the Institute will be the intellectual home for restorative theory and practice.

Some disagreement may exist within the board and the community with regard to the responsibility of individual trustees for fund raising. There is a working board and several members are engaged with ongoing affairs in a productive way, although this is not required.

Finally, managing the excitement and threats of organizational growth could be a young academic institution's next transition. Both the board and a new senior team share a responsibility to manage the *centrifugal forces* that can develop quickly. What is now a focused mission for a small community with one campus could be challenged by rapid growth and diversity in products and services, either domestically or internationally. The community is talking about organizational growth and the team hopes that the same degree of collaborative planning will be shown in managing a possible uptick in size and organizational complexity as went to managing the downturn.

### **Suggestions**

1. As the Institute matures as an academic organization and the possibility of a capital campaign is considered, the skill sets and giving capacity of the board warrant discussion.
2. A well-managed growth path will require a defined role relationship between the board chair and the president, affording both parties a mix of support and challenge.

### **Standard 5 – Administration**

*The institution's administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution's organization and governance.*

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

### **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

Developing new leaders and staff to meet the challenges of both leadership succession and program growth is part of the *Strategic Plan 2015-2020*. A well-defined organizational chart exists with a reporting structure. The president is qualified with the appropriate academic background and mission specific experience—he is empowered to lead the organization towards college goals. The management team has appropriate skills and mission-specific experience. Performance evaluation of administrators and support staff is carried out annually through self-assessments that are reviewed with a supervisor. The administration has defined roles and responsibilities, and embodies a thorough understanding of institutional mission, goals, and objectives.

The Board recruits members who possess an understanding of, and experience with, restorative practices and does the Institute when it recruits faculty and staff. Faculty and staff members also receive training in applying restorative practices and in understanding concepts important for the success of higher education institutions, such as planning and assessment through in-service and continuing education.

## **Accomplishments**

Succession planning is organized and notably transparent. The founding president retired June, 2015 and to date the presidential transition has been well managed. A management succession plan for a long-serving vice president of academic affairs who retires at the end of March is in place.

## **Suggestions**

1. New marketing initiatives may be needed to build and diversify enrollment in the graduate program and this capacity will require staff support.
2. The board would be strengthened by adding members with finance experience and skills.
3. The senior leadership team, which is new, would benefit from ongoing professional development and mentoring as they assume their duties.

## **Standard 6 – Integrity**

*In the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support for academic and intellectual freedom.*

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

## **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

The use of restorative practices like fair process in operations leads to transparency and openness of intellectual inquiry that, in turn, fosters integrity. The compliance report (which is attached) and the team visit found a high level of transparency and protection of privacy for both employees and prospective and current students. Institute norms and policies are published, accessible and regularly reviewed.

The issue of intellectual property rights that result from the creative activity of employees does not appear to be addressed by existing policy.

Faculty and students are increasing their involvement in research, and the Institute has responded by having all faculty and students complete NIH on-line training in protection of human subjects in research. The self-study implied that only two research projects had been submitted for IRB review since the last self-study, a number that seemed low when all students are required to complete capstone projects, other courses required projects, and several faculty have projects that likely involve human subjects. The site visit clarified that, in fact, there were two standard (full) board reviews, with about 25 other submissions annually being characterized as exempt, or qualifying for expedited review.

The curriculum offers sufficient course opportunities for students to graduate in a timely manner and regularly communicates with prospective and current students via the website and through email. The institution maintains an archive of catalogues and policy changes on its internal server.

The Institute has published policies regarding forms of academic dishonesty, but does not address co-submission (where a student submits work for one class to meet requirements of another class without instructor prior approval). The grievance policy is published and applies to cases of academic dishonesty.

### **Suggestions**

1. The administration should consider adopting a system such as Turn-it in or SafeAssign to educate students regarding the nuances of academic integrity and to let the institution monitor plagiarism.
2. An intellectual property policy for the creative work of employees should be considered.

### **Standard 7 – Institutional Assessment**

*The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its accreditation standards.*

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

### **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

A review of the self-study report and supporting documents such as the Comprehensive Assessment Plan show that the Institute has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission. Its assessment processes are useful, cost-effective (use of scorecards such as dashboard indicators, surveys, Graduate Weekly updates, financial reports) and reasonably accurate.

The team finds that the IIRP has a documented, organized, and sustained assessment process to evaluate the total range of programs and services. Evidence was found that assessment results are shared with constituents (COW) and used in institutional planning, resource allocation and renewal and to inform decisions. Written institutional plans (strategic, technology, marketing and facilities) plans incorporate assessment results.

### **Accomplishments**

The staff, faculty and the leadership are commended for developing a comprehensive plan to address all the institution's major functions.

### **Suggestions**

As the institution grows in size and complexity, professional staff will be needed to support institutional research and assessment.

## **Standard 8 – Student Admissions and Retention**

*The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students' educational goals.*

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

### **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

The self-study and its supporting documents, such as admissions tracking reports, student surveys, all demonstrate that the Institute has admission policies that support and reflect the mission of the institution. Policies and criteria are available for prospective students to make informed decisions. Accurate and comprehensive information regarding its academic programs is available as is a statement of student learning outcomes available to prospective students. Students have information and appropriate advice on financial aid, scholarships, loans and refunds. Finally, students can access ongoing assessment of student success specific to the mission.

Continuing education is large and growing, with nearly 10,000 attendees in 2014-15. The new master's program is small (unduplicated headcount of 124 in 2014-15), but enrollment has been growing with the new hybrid design. Primarily part-time adult students enroll and the administration monitors time to completion, which for the first term enrolled is 44.1 months. The average time to complete a degree from the admission date is 32.2 months (*Data Book, AY 2014-15*). Both measures have increased slightly since the prior academic year (31.9 and 40.2 months, respectively), but the data sets are tiny. The leadership knows that continued vigilance in enrollment management will be necessary for the credit-bearing programs because of their small size.

### **Accomplishments**

The Institute's admissions process matches the institution's mission to advance the education of professionals in restorative practices to students who are dedicated to improving their work places and communities.

### **Suggestions**

A marketing plan to reach diverse segments will be critical for the Institute to continue to grow enrollment.

## **Standard 9 – Student Support Services**

*The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution's goals for students.*

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

### **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

A range of student support services are provided to meet the needs of the general student population. A qualified and well trained staff supports the Institute's mission by providing essential services: admissions, financial aid, registration, tutoring, security, disability services, and advising.

Student services are organized as a single point of service through the Registrar's Office, which enables students, faculty, and staff to work together to effectively meet student needs. Furthermore, the team heard few complaints from students and the institution has a comprehensive grievance policy consistent with its mission and the principles of restorative practices.

### **Suggestions**

1. The Institute should evaluate the viability of outsourcing select student support services (such as tier one technical support 24/7).
2. Students would like access to all course syllabi before registering for a course, allowing them to balance study with home and work schedules.
3. Students might benefit from required periodic meetings with advisors when selecting courses.
4. A student orientation course might introduce student services, describe resources that promote student success, and help students navigate the learning management system.

### **Standard 10 – Faculty**

*The institution's instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals.*

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

### **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

The Institute adheres to the teacher-practitioner concept for faculty members, who seem to be skilled practitioners of restorative methods. That faculty members are practitioners strengthens connections with restorative practices communities in education, health care and criminal justice. A review of faculty curriculum vitae evidences good participation in faculty development workshops, some international, like restorative justice, Aggression Replacement Training®, counseling for delinquent and troubled youth, drug and alcohol addiction, foster care, K-12 education, and trauma.

An example of faculty oversight of the curriculum occurred in 2010 when the Institute was faced with declining graduate enrollment and financial instability. The administration used the restorative method of "fair process" to redesign the programs, creating a single hybrid master's degree in place of two face-to-face programs.

Three of the full-time faculty and one adjunct hold the rank of Associate Professor with three full-time faculty and five members of the adjunct faculty holding the rank of lecturer. The Institute does not offer tenure; each faculty member has an annual review with the senior academic officer and receives an appointment letter stating responsibilities for the year. The incoming provost plans to continue to foster career progression toward promotion.

Finally, the faculty does not have the scholarly profile of peer-reviewed publication normally associated with a graduate curriculum. Expectations for research and scholarship have been increasing in line with the stated mission “to develop the emerging field of restorative practices,” with the newest faculty appointment bringing a strong profile in applied research.

The new provost told the team that developing faculty research and peer-reviewed publication will be a focus for the next five years. To date, institutional support for faculty development has focused, understandably, on teaching and the development of skills in on-line teaching and advising. In addition, since the restructuring faculty members have held varied portfolios, some fulfilling service duties such as continuing education instruction or work with model restorative programs—which limits time for research. These responsibilities were assumed during the financial crisis to protect the five faculty lines required by the State.

### **Suggestions**

1. Expectations of faculty for teaching in continuing education and administration of model programs should be reviewed to increase time for scholarly endeavors.
2. The Institute might explore hiring visiting faculty with research profiles to form active research teams to help faculty develop research skills, productivity, and confidence.

### **Standard 11 – Educational Offerings**

*The institution’s educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.*

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

### **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

The educational offerings provided by the IIRP are tightly aligned with its mission. Both the 12-credit master’s level certificate and 30-credit Master of Science, each in restorative practices, include appropriate areas of academic study. The courses are found to be of sufficient content, breadth and length, and both programs show appropriate levels of rigor. Student feedback and responses to surveys suggest the curriculum is focused on, and excels at, serving the needs of adult learners, fostering a climate

conducive to success. The team saw repeated instances that the faculty and administration constantly review and improve both the curriculum and its pedagogy.

The IIRP policy stipulates that no credits from previous master's level work may be transferred toward the master's degree, other than the 12 credits students may have obtained from their previous enrollment in the IIRP's own certificate (these four certificate courses serve as coursework in the master's program). Importantly, the goals for the certificate program constitute the first three program goals of the master's program, fostering coherence between the two offerings. Each graduate course has established outcomes that are linked to program and institutional goals.

Based on examination of student work as well as two focus groups conducted with master's students, the team finds that the curriculum fosters a coherent learning experience, one that promotes a synthesis of learning regarding the goals and benefits of restorative practices when applied to individuals and schools.

However, to meet the ambitious goal the Institute has set for itself to establish restorative practices as a mainstream academic discipline, the sequence and rigor of research-related courses and research-focused assignments within courses should be strengthened. Of particular note is the lack of required course sequencing. Other than the first and last course in the master's program, students are able to select the order of their coursework, making it possible for them to take the only required research course toward the end. Several students suggested that they would have benefited more from the program had they had a graduate-level understanding of contemporary research methods and design earlier in their program.

The Institute provides sufficient learning resources, facilities, and library services. Because the half-time librarian is new to the institution and to restorative practices, collaboration between the librarian, faculty, and administration, especially in fostering information literacy and technological competency, should be strengthened. The library has a modest print collection in an attractive space and makes appropriate online library services available through Penn State and consortia, but the actual use of library services (a problem for many colleges) should be monitored and expectations for library research should be integrated into the curriculum. Further, as the institution expands both the number of students served, and the level and amount of research generated by faculty and students increases, digital resources will need support.

The Institute is a young, fast-developing academic culture. One of the distinguishing features of graduate curricula is the development of research acumen and critical thinking, and the ability to cope with the extraordinary complexity needed to improve society domestically, not to mention internationally. The Institute excels at providing opportunities for students to apply restorative practices to their professional and personal lives, offering repeated opportunities to develop skills and dispositions associated with restorative practices, all while fostering high levels of student engagement and collaboration.

At the same time, the integration of theory and practice in this curriculum favors the practice element. While restorative practices as a practical process is highlighted in all courses, and some middle-range theoretical concepts such as social capital are discussed, strengthening civil society—part of the



mission—appears to be nearly absent in required readings, assignments and student dialogue. Compared to discourse with respect to restorative *techniques*, students and some faculty members did not articulate a nuanced conception of the meaning and significance of civil society for this emerging field, or how on-the-ground restorative practices might interface with macro-level processes and characteristics. The Institute’s goal of establishing restorative practices as a domain of social science inquiry requires that the curriculum and faculty and student research more directly engage with contemporary scholarship on the nature and functioning of civil society.

### **Accomplishments**

The Institute is commended for having organized a curriculum to foster staff and student engagement with restorative purposes and methods.

### **Suggestions**

1. The administration should improve the integration of the library into courses and program goals such as information literacy (e.g., consider “embedded librarian” practices).
2. The faculty should offer workshops or other forums regarding research methods to help students overcome reported anxiety associated with learning empirical methods.
3. Research fellowships might be offered to attract students who show promise as scholars of restorative practices.

### **Recommendation**

Given the Institute’s mission to establish restorative practices as a field and to enhance civil society, the faculty should review curriculum sequencing and content to develop student understanding of research methods as well as the theory and debates related to civil society.

### **Standard 12 – General Education**

*The institution’s curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and the technological competency.*

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

### **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

The Institute offers only a graduate-level certificate and one master's program. Both require that students hold the bachelors degree from an accredited institution. A number of working adult students with whom we spoke also hold at least one master's degree. The curriculum also requires a research course and graduate-level writing, and inspection of the capstone papers and videos suggest that the IIRP students

possess essential collegiate skills and a broad general education.

### **Standard 13 – Related Educational Activities**

*The institution's programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.*

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

#### **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

The Institute has in place the fundamental elements to meet this standard, which includes offering an online/distance education program that meet institution-wide standards for quality of instruction, articulated expectations of student learning, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness. In addition, the institution utilizes the appropriate technology to meet industry standards to verify online student identity.

The Institute has a large and growing continuing education program of non-credit offerings in the field of restorative practices. These offerings have introduced students to restorative practices concepts, and is proving to be an effective recruiting vehicle for the master's program. This unit generates significant revenue to support credit-bearing programs, having had nearly 10,000 attendees in 2014-15 and 603 licensees in 18 countries. Hybrid graduate courses for the certificate program and the master's program combine participation in continuing education offerings with online course instruction.

#### **Suggestions**

1. A growth management plan would identify opportunities for expansion and align resources to build an infrastructure that is scalable.
2. Growth in online enrollment should be guided by formal guidelines for the delivery of online courses and services.
3. As national and international enrollment grows, quality controls for instructor training in non-credit settings are recommended to protect the IIRP's brand and leadership position.
4. A curriculum development expert should be considered to assist faculty with hybrid course design as well as the delivery and evaluation of online instruction.

#### **Recommendations**

The administration should strengthen academic oversight of the comparability and transferability of the IIRP hybrid courses into the master's program.

## **Standard 14 – Assessment of Student Learning**

*Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.*

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

### **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

Based on a review of the self-study report and other supporting documents such as the learning matrices, student survey reports and course evaluations, the Institute has an organized, systematic and sustained assessment plan for measuring student learning outcomes for its certificate and for its master's degree. Articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes exist for all levels (institution, program, and course). The documented and sustainable assessment process includes direct and indirect evidence of student learning. The curriculum and assessment plan has a realistic timetable and results were found that students are achieving key institutional and program learning outcomes. Moreover, the team finds that student learning assessment information is shared with constituents and that student learning assessment (Standard 14) is integrated with institutional assessment (Standard 7).

The institution is commended for establishing a broad-based assessment processes for the two academic programs with the full involvement of faculty and active support by the administration. However, three areas need attention.

First, the IIRP's mission refers to "strengthening civil society throughout the world." No statement of what is meant by civil society was found by the team and a substantive framework is not yet part of the curriculum, either at the certificate or the master's level. A mission rubric is used for the final capstone project, but it is not developed.

Second, information literacy is a component of both institutional goals and the Master of Science program goals. A review of learning matrices does not show an articulation of what information literacy means for this emerging discipline and, in courses where it is assessed, it is not clear *what* is being assessed.

Third, continuing education is a large and vital component of the IIRP, both for outreach and revenue. The institution expects to expand continuing education. Articulated goals, objectives, and expectations of student learning are needed.

### **Suggestions**

1. The faculty should define what graduate-level competency in information literacy means and tailor its assessment accordingly.
2. The faculty should define what graduate-level competency in program goals means and tailor its assessment accordingly.
3. Assessment of strengthening civil society should be added to both the certificate and master's programs.

## **VI--CONCLUSION**

The International Institute for Restorative Practices is commended for its transparent, collaborative governance as well as its openness to learning about the requirements made of a nascent institution of higher learning. The administration, faculty and staff integrate the values and methods of restorative practices, broadly and deeply, in operations, educational programs and assessment.

At the same time, the Institute's two graduate academic programs to train leaders are small and feature a hybrid platform that may be new to some students and faculty members. The community also wants to be known internationally as the intellectual home of restorative practices worldwide. For all these worthy aspirations, the team's most important recommendation is to update the strategic plan to strengthen the Institute's academic culture and to prepare for enrollment growth if its ambitions are realized.

The team again thanks the institution, and we hope the community will be open to the ideas contained in this report, all of which are being offered in the spirit of collegiality and peer review. As a reminder, the next steps in the multi-level evaluation process are as follows:

The institution replies to the team report in a written response addressed to the Commission.

The team Chair submits a confidential brief to the Commission, summarizing the team report and conveying the team's proposal for accreditation action.

The Commission staff and the Commission's Committee on Evaluation Reports review the institutional self-study document, the evaluation team report, the institution's formal response, and the Chair's brief to formulate a proposed action to the Commission.

The full Commission, after considering information gained in the preceding states, takes formal accreditation action and notifies the institution.

Attachment A. External Review of the IIRP Compliance Reports