

REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM  
SPECIAL VISIT

To NewSchool of Architecture & Design

May 2-5, 2022

Team Roster

Fred Fehlau, Chair, Provost (retired)  
Art Center College of Design

Su Swarat, Assistant Chair, Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness &  
Accreditation Liaison Officer  
California State University, Fullerton

David Ely, Associate Dean, Fowler College of Business  
San Diego State University

Karen Hofmann, Provost  
Art Center College of Design

Tracy Heller, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Alliant International University

WSCUC Liaison: Barbara Gross Davis, Vice President  
WASC Senior College and University Commission

The team evaluated the institution under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

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## SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

### A. Description of the Institution, Accreditation History, as Relevant, and the Visit

The NewSchool of Architecture & Design (NewSchool) was established in 1980 to provide a professional architecture school in the San Diego area. It is housed in the 83,000 square feet of industrial maker space in San Diego’s East Village. As a for-profit institution, NewSchool has changed ownership multiple times, with Laureate Education being the most recent long-time owner (from 2008 to 2020). With approval from the Commission in December 2019, NewSchool was purchased by Ambow Education Holdings Ltd. (Ambow), a publicly traded company, in spring 2020, resulting in the institution going through a series of transitions over the past two years. Commission approval required a commitment from Ambow to cover any NewSchool budget or financial deficit for the first three years following the implementation of ownership change.

Concurrently, NewSchool has also undergone major leadership and staffing changes, including at the president and the board level. Shortly after the unexpected passing of the president who oversaw the 2018 reaffirmation visit (whose tenure began in January 2016), the then chair of the board took over as the interim president. The interim president led the preparation and submission of the institution’s special visit report. Very recently in March 2022, the new permanent president began her tenure at NewSchool, and was the president at the time of the special visit. Turnovers in critical positions in areas such as finance, assessment, IR, and IT also took place in the past several years.

NewSchool’s mission is “to nurture and inspire design-minded learners to become citizen architects and designers.” The principles of project-based pedagogy and humanistic approach underlie the institution’s programs and operations. Academic Pillars that identify student academic values (professional preparation, engagement with community, human welfare, environmental empathy, service), Affinity areas that provide faculty scholarship foci (design + practice, design + strategy, design + health, design + environment, service), and the interrelationships between the two frame the

institution's offerings. Additionally, NewSchool's most recent strategic plan (approved in December 2020) specified three goals for the institution: 1) Enhance and expand the academic experience; 2) Promote enrollment vitality; and 3) Achieve operational effectiveness and long-term financial sustainability.

As of spring 2022, NewSchool offers seven bachelor's programs, six master's programs, and one certificate program, with a total enrollment of 368. Approximately 80% of these students are undergraduates, and over 50% of the students are enrolled in the Bachelor of Architecture program. NewSchool's professional architecture programs – Bachelor of Architecture and Master of Architecture – are accredited by the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB). The Bachelor of Interior Architecture and Design program is currently seeking accreditation from the Accreditation Commission of the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA).

Except for the fully online terms due to the pandemic, NewSchool offers all programs in-person except for the online-only Master of Construction Management program. Integrative Studies, NewSchool's General Education program, also offers some courses online during the summer term. Partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, enrollment at NewSchool has been declining for the past few years, with several undergraduate and graduate programs having single digit enrollment. Efforts are underway to increase enrollment, details of which are discussed later in this report.

Initially recognized by the Accrediting Council of Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) in 1991, NewSchool received initial accreditation from WSCUC in 2014, and submitted a progress report in 2016 in the areas of retention and graduation rates, and program review. NewSchool received six years for reaffirmation of accreditation in 2018, with an interim report scheduled for 2021 to address issues in finances, assessment, and program review. When the ownership change from Laureate to Ambow took place, the Commission eliminated the November 2021 interim report, and instead asked for progress reports in fall 2020 and fall 2021, followed by a special visit in spring 2022. The progress reports were

aimed to seek updates regarding the status of transition to Ambow including transparency and integrity of operations, enrollments, and the financial position of NewSchool; and the special visit was to address concerns from the previously scheduled interim report plus other issues.

This special visit examined the following issues: 1) Enrollment status, particularly NewSchool's efforts to increase enrollment; 2) Financial status and NewSchool's strategies to achieve a balanced budget; 3) Shared services provided by Ambow Education Incorporated (AEI); 4) Assessment of student learning outcomes and program review; and 5) Governance and leadership.

## **B. Description of Team's Review Process**

The special visit took place in person at the NewSchool San Diego campus over a three-day period. The team reviewed all the documents and supplemental materials submitted by the institution, including the special visit report, the appendices, and additional required documents (e.g. budget update, program review samples). The team members thoroughly discussed these materials in advance of the visit, sought additional information from the institution, and completed worksheets that summarized a preliminary evaluation of the institution's report. In parallel, the team worked with the NewSchool ALO to finalize the visit schedule.

Prior to the May 2-5 visit, the chair met with the NewSchool president on April 15, 2022 to address any questions about the review process, learn any recent updates, and to identify additional topics of exploration during the visit. The team convened on its own the day before the three-day visit to narrow down the foci of the various meetings during the visit. The visit began with meetings with the president, her operations team, the immediate interim president, and the WSCUC steering committee and senior leadership. These meetings helped the team gain a high-level view of the institutional context, challenges, and opportunities, as well as understand how the self-study process took place that culminated in the institution's special visit report.

During the remainder of the visit, the team met – primarily as a whole group – with a wide range of constituents who are responsible for the key areas discussed in the report, ranging from enrollment and finance to assessment and program review. Open forums with faculty, staff, and students were held as well. The team also reviewed email received via the confidential email account, which provided the team with additional information and context.

At the conclusion of the visit, the team chair met with the president and the interim president in the morning of May 5, 2022 to inform them of the final commendations and recommendations (included in [Section III](#) of this report). At a public exit meeting followed immediately after, where the same information was shared to the NewSchool community by the chair.

The entire visit process ran smoothly, and the meetings were informative. The team is thankful to the NewSchool team for all their hard work in making the visit a success, including setting up the schedule and all the meeting logistics, responding to the team’s requests, and providing data and documents where possible to help the team gain a thorough understanding of the institution.

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

The institution’s special visit report is structured to address the required issues – Change of ownership and transition; Shared services with Ambow Education Incorporated (AEI); Financial stability including enrollment, marketing, and student support and experiences; and Informed Decision making (assessment and program review). The report development was led by a group of “writing team facilitators” that included the interim president, the chief financial officer/shared services operations manager, and the director of assessment. The writing team facilitators formed sub-groups that contributed to various sections and provided evidentiary support. The report preparation process involved opportunities for the broad campus community to review and provide feedback.

The institutional report was well organized and provided updated descriptions in each of the areas of inquiry. The report provided a sufficient overview of how the institution has strived to support

student success and to achieve a balanced budget, offering an honest portrait of the challenges and opportunities. The discussions made clear NewSchool's commitment to providing quality education to its students, and indicated that the institution treated this review as an opportunity for reflection and continuous improvement.

In the judgment of the team, the report provided adequate evidence of how the institution addressed the issues identified by the WSCUC Commission and the previous visit team. It provided the team with a good foundation for the visit, situating the team in appropriate context while exploring important issues.

## SECTION II – EVALUATION OF ISSUES UNDER THE STANDARDS

### A. Financial Stability and Enrollment Planning (CFRs 2.10, 2.11, 2.13, 3.4, 4.6)

To examine NewSchool's financial state, the team carefully reviewed several financial reports and enrollment data: 1) Audited financial reports for FY2018, FY2019, and FY2020; 2) Preliminary P&L statement for 2021; 3) Detailed budget for 2022; 4) Comparison of the FY2022 budget against actual results for the first quarter; and 5) Enrollment data for AY 2019-20 and AY 2021-22 disaggregated by program and by enrollment status (i.e., new, transfer, and continuing).

**Enrollment:** The financial state of NewSchool is critically dependent upon enrollment. The data show that student headcount was 554 in fall 2017, but fell to 501 in fall 2019. Enrollment declined further during the pandemic, and stood at 378 students in fall 2021 and 368 in spring 2022, significantly lower than previously stated breakeven enrollment number (e.g. during the 2018 affirmation visit). The declines were across multiple programs and for all enrollment status groups. At the time of the visit (i.e., spring 2022), 80% of enrolled students were undergraduates (n=294), 68% of whom were in the Bachelor of Architecture program (n=201). The second largest program was the Bachelor of Interior Architecture and Design program, enrolling 37 or 10% of the student population. The remaining students spread across other programs.

The FY2022 budget incorporated the projection that enrollment would grow 14% between the fall 2021 and fall 2022 terms. The two most recent terms at the time of the visit were the 2022 winter and spring terms, and the actual enrollment for both terms fell short of target. Institutional representatives explained that NewSchool was focused on reaching enrollment targets for the remaining terms in 2022 using a number of initiatives such as publishing the summer schedule earlier, and encouraging students to start taking classes in summer rather than fall. Additional resources were reported to have been allocated to support efforts to reach the fall 2022 target.



Recent changes to marketing and recruiting operations were viewed by institutional representatives as a significant shift toward more effective and less costly practices. NewSchool is actively evaluating the marketing and recruiting functions and will make additional changes. For example, international students are expected to become a more significant portion of the student body, eventually reaching a share equal to that of domestic first-time freshmen and transfer students. Institutional representatives shared that they plan to focus on growing existing programs over the next several years as well as pursuing growth through new programs.

**Financial Stability:** NewSchool experienced small operating losses in 2018 and 2019, prior to the acquisition by Ambow on March 6, 2020. From March 6 to December 31, 2020, the institution's operating expenses exceeded tuition and fees, net of scholarships and tuition discounts, by 25%. This deficit was partially offset by the CARES Act revenue and an income tax benefit. Based on a preliminary report for FY2021, total operating expenses exceeded total revenues, net of scholarships and tuition discounts, by 17%. The institution reported that it acted to reduce costs in FY2021 to better align expenses with revenues, and that Ambow has not had to add a capital investment in NewSchool. Laureate, the former owner, agreed to pay an online education subsidy over four years for the loss of certain online businesses. This appears as receivables on NewSchool's balance sheet.

NewSchool's budget for FY2022 projects a small operating deficit, but that the institution will breakeven after non-operating factors are considered. In comparison to FY2021, tuition and other revenues are projected to rise by 21% while total expenses will rise by only 7%. Revenue generation is enhanced by a 3% increase in tuition in fall 2022. The budget incorporates a projection of 3% cost savings from adopting a shared services model. As detailed further in [Section II.B](#), Ambow Education Incorporated (AEI), a subsidiary of Ambow, provides shared services to NewSchool and another Ambow affiliated institution. The institution's report notes the potential of additional savings through shared

services efficiencies in FY2022. However, falling short of the enrollment target will put the achievement of breakeven in FY2022 at risk.

The agreement with AEI for shared services is an effective way to manage back office expenses since, as a small institution, NewSchool lacks the scale to perform these functions efficiently on its own. This arrangement is not new – NewSchool benefited from a similar arrangement with its previous owner, Laureate. If AEI plans to establish shared service agreements with additional institutions, it could result in lower charges to NewSchool as AEI’s costs are spread more broadly. However, at the same time, this model also has the risk that a decline in the number of AEI clients in the future could result in higher charges for shared services to NewSchool.

The Department of Education’s website for the Federal Student Aid Office shows that NewSchool has been on Heightened Cash Monitoring 1 (HCM1) since at least 2015. However, institutional representatives indicated that this status does not impact the institution in any meaningful way. The special visit report notes that a number of revenue enhancement initiatives have been proposed, including eSports and non-credit continuing education programs. However, substantive actions have not yet been taken on these alternative revenue generation proposals.

The team observed that, while the steps taken by NewSchool to improve the deployment of resources directed toward marketing and recruiting have shown some positive effects on enrollment and budget, the student enrollment remains substantially below pre-pandemic levels. Reaching its breakeven estimate of students in the near term and surpassing breakeven in the long term will require successfully building on the institution’s marketing and recruiting capacities. Given the critical role that enrollment growth has in achieving financial sustainability, the team recommends that NewSchool accelerate the development of a formal strategic marketing, enrollment, and retention plan. This plan should be supported with adequate resources, have clear measurable targets, and metrics that allow the institution to monitor progress and the success of its initiatives (see [Section III](#), Recommendation 1).

The institution's growth plan should guide resource allocations at the program level as well as at the institution level to achieve the appropriate balance between budget efficiency and quality student educational experiences (see [Section III](#), Recommendation 2).

Since the change of ownership, NewSchool has improved financial outcomes mostly through expense reductions. While eliminating operational inefficiencies is desirable, cost containment alone cannot bring about financial sustainability. Future budgets are best guided by an institutional strategic plan that identifies pathways to greater revenue generation (tuition and non-tuition), provides robust student services, and ensures that expense reductions are sustainable and do not negatively impact service quality (see [Section III](#), Recommendation 3).

#### **B. Shared Services with Ambow Education Incorporated (AEI) (CFRs 2.13, 3.5)**

To understand the changes resulting from the Ambow purchase, the team reviewed documents provided by NewSchool and the Commission, and engaged in conversations with institutional representatives and Ambow stakeholders. As mentioned earlier, the ownership transition from Laureate to Ambow led NewSchool to begin an 18-month migration on the shared services previously provided by Laureate. Ambow Education Incorporated (AEI), a subsidiary of Ambow, now provides NewSchool with technology, accounting & finance, human resources, bursar, registrar, and financial aid services. The immediate changes include the replacement of NewSchool's previous learning management system, Blackboard, with Canvas, and the implementation of CampusNexus as the student information management system. Both transitions were completed by summer 2021. In meetings with multiple stakeholders, including AEI staff, many individuals disclosed that (understandably) this transition was not as smooth as planned. Students in particular expressed concerns regarding the quality and responsiveness of the student services provided by AEI. In the open forum, multiple students expressed frustration with the lack of campus-based staff to support the shared services, and the frequent delays in receiving responses from AEI. While many NewSchool stakeholders, including

students, acknowledged the complexity of the transition and the improvement thus far, it is clear that additional fine tuning of the shared services is needed.

As mentioned earlier, AEI also provides services to Bay State College (in Massachusetts), another institution owned by Ambow. The president of Bay State College, the interim president of the NewSchool, and the AEI CFO/operations manager(same person) met regularly during the NewSchool transition to ensure proper and efficient deployment of AEI shared services. The new NewSchool president is expected to take over this responsibility. NewSchool has repeatedly assured WSCUC that it is separate and independent from the operations of Bay State College. In terms of reporting structure, AEI does not report directly to the NewSchool president; it reports to the Ambow CEO and Ambow Board of Directors. However, NewSchool does have campus-based support staff (e.g. a director of finance, and a manager of technology — see organization chart, [Appendix I](#)) who reports directly to the president and interfaces with AEI on some of the shared services.

**Solution Center:** The impact of AEI’s shared services is most noticeably evident in the integration with the NewSchool’s Solution Center, which is a significant component of the overall student experience. According to institutional representatives, students communicate directly with AEI for their student accounts and financial aid matters. One repeatedly cited concern, as mentioned earlier, is the lack of responsiveness of the AEI staff (in many cases not receiving any responses for more than 48 hours). NewSchool staff, particularly those at the Solution Center, have had to intercede on students’ behalf to get issues resolved. A review of the service level agreement with AEI indicates that the agreement does not contain any specific quality assurance indicators for responsiveness or other aspects of the user experiences. As such, the team recommends NewSchool to revisit the agreement with AEI to ensure ongoing assessment and quality assurance.

While the shared services could be a budget friendly and effective way to provide student support, the team recommends that NewSchool monitor and optimize the implementation of the

service level agreement with AEI by setting performance metrics and regularly assessing the efficacy and quality of the services provided (see [Section III](#), Recommendation 4).

### **C. Assessment (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.7)**

NewSchool was commended in the 2018 reaffirmation review for the assessment foundation it had established, as well as the development of a culture of assessment fueled by the engagement of faculty and staff. The institution was directed to continue and expand its efforts to assess student learning – both curricular and co-curricular – in a sustainable way, by collecting and triangulating multiple measures (both direct and indirect) and using different types of student learning assessment data (both quantitative and qualitative). To evaluate the progress the institution made in this area, the team reviewed the relevant sections in the institutional report and examined examples of assessment activities and results.

It appears that despite the leadership change (i.e. the previous director of assessment left the institution, and the new director joined relatively recently), all constituencies at the institution, including the faculty, chairs, and deans, continue to act collectively and responsibly to implement an effective assessment process. The student learning outcomes (SLOs) appear to be appropriate, and the assessment of student learning appears to inform curricular improvement. Specifically, the Assessment Handbook, which is very comprehensive and detailed, is firmly in place to guide the assessment processes at the program and the institution level. Members of the long-standing Assessment Leadership Council (ALC) continue to serve as assessment champions at the institution, and the ALC-Presidential forum is indicative of the leadership commitment and support to assessment. There is intentional alignment between CLOs, PLOs and ILOs, as well as good efforts to assess an ILO every two years (e.g. Professional Practice). The assessment practices seem to continue to mature, as exemplified by the rubric used by the Architecture program and the Design program (institutional report, p.28-29). Examples of “closing-the-loop” activities provide evidence that the programs are using assessment to

inform decision making. Some notable practices include the “pandemic discoveries” through the Integrative Studies program’s assessment of the creative problem solving SLO that led the program to revisit different modalities (online vs hybrid vs in-person) for a more flexible and equitable curriculum, and the Architecture program’s effort of acting upon assessment results to update and synchronize content, and to include more case studies and exercises, which in turn resulted in significant improvement in the outcome.

Assessment is also integrated as part of the program review process. The recently submitted Architecture Program Review provides evidence that the program and the institution have made progress in establishing and implementing a rigorous assessment, documentation, and analysis process to improve student learning. It is encouraging to see the three-year assessment cycles coupled with the alignment of PLOs with the NAAB Student Performance Criteria (SPCs), and to also see the results from the assessment process leading to actionable suggestions in improving student success.

The use of Anthology/Campus Labs system to manage assessment activity documentation is a good practice. However, it appears that only overall scores (e.g. in Baseline) are provided as assessment results without efforts to disaggregate data across rubric categories or student groups (e.g. who the students that “partially met” the SLO are, and what obstacles they encounter). In addition, there is a lack of evidence through the provided annual assessment reports that the institution is intentionally integrating direct and indirect (e.g. student feedback or reflection) measures or triangulating both quantitative and qualitative data, as the Commission recommended in 2018. It appears that little progress has been made in the area of co-curricular assessment since the last reaffirmation visit as well.

The team concluded that the institution has continued to make progress in student learning assessment. The team recommends that NewSchool develop a systematic multi-year assessment plan (including a master schedule) to assess all the PLOs for each degree program, and to expand assessment to co-curricular offerings (see [Section III](#), Recommendation 7). While most NewSchool programs have

small cohorts, the institution is encouraged to engage in appropriate efforts to disaggregate assessment data to ensure equity in student learning.

#### **D. Program Review (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.7, 2.10, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7)**

At the time of the last reaffirmation in 2018, NewSchool had developed a comprehensive 2018-19 program review handbook and template, and were commencing a seven-year cycle of review. Since then, the institution has completed an additional program review of the three design programs within the School of Design, and at the time of the visit, is in the process of finalizing the program review for the Architecture programs, delayed from 2020-21.

The team reviewed the program review documents for the School of Design. The program review process is described in detail, including a kick-off meeting, self-study, incorporation of external reviewers, and review and consideration of assessment results at a designated faculty meeting with involvement of both full and part time faculty. The consistency across self-study formats reflects the establishment of program review guidelines, and the foundation for a systematic approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation across programs.

Echoing the nature of assessment involvement at the institution, the program review documents reflect the collective responsibility of all stakeholders in the assessment and improvement of student learning, student success, and educational quality. The program review for each program includes curricular maps that align CLOs, PLOs, and ILOs; enrollment demographics, retention and graduation rates, and job placement rates were clearly presented with observations of trends and comparisons across programs. The program review process could benefit from including comparisons to benchmarks – both external peer institutions and internal aspirational standards set by the program or the institution. Like assessment data, while acknowledging that cohort sizes are small, the institution is encouraged to disaggregate retention, graduation, and other student success data by demographic

factors, including gender, ethnicity, age, and other factors of interest, to explore potential trends, inform student retention, and develop focused initiatives toward student success.

The design program review self-study provided a comprehensive description of the assessment of the PLO “Critical Thinking,” including a well-developed rubric and evidence for “closing the loop” in terms of curricular and assessment improvements. With that said, the team believes that more than one PLO can be assessed in a seven year cycle, and encourages NewSchool to expand the number of outcomes examined during the program review process. The Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programs in Architecture received an eight-year specialty accreditation from the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) in 2016. In this case, the program was required to rewrite PLOs at the time of the program review to align with substantial changes in NAAB standards introduced in 2020. The institution engaged in both formal and informal review of the SLOs including gaining feedback from external professional practitioners and internal faculty, which is an effective strategy.

The program review process is supported at the institution level by the director of assessment and accreditation, and receives project management support from administrative personnel. The institution utilizes a part-time consultant to manage institutional research (IR) functions, whose interactions with faculty and staff are largely coordinated through the director of assessment and accreditation. Given the critical role accurate and easily accessible data play in ensuring the quality of program offerings and supporting student success, the team encourages NewSchool to examine the efficacy of its IR current operation, and invest in IR capacity as needed.

The team commends the institution for demonstrating continued progress in the area of program review. The previously developed program review handbook and review template have created consistency in depth, breadth, and focus – in program review as well as assessment – and resulted in consistent evidence collection at the program level to allow for data-informed improvement. The team encourages NewSchool to engage in regular updates of its program review guidelines and



timeline. There is also clear evidence for both internal dissemination of data through faculty meetings and intentional efforts to “close the loop” using assessment results. With that said, the team believes that the program review process could be further strengthened by including additional critical data points such as program financials, course evaluations, student experience surveys, alumni surveys, and student to faculty ratios. In particular, with several of the institution’s programs challenged by low enrollment, the team recommends that NewSchool add metrics in program review to help inform the evaluation of new program viability, and/or the decision to sunset programs that may not be financially viable or deflect resources from other programs (see [Section III](#), Recommendation 7).

#### **E. Governance and Leadership (CFR 3.3, 3.4, 3.7, 4.6)**

As part of its institutional report, NewSchool was asked to provide an update regarding current governance and leadership, particularly pertaining to the search for a permanent president. Despite the long search process, a new permanent president was hired and began her tenure in March 2022. At the time of the visit, the new president had been installed, although she was unable to attend meetings in person due to COVID travel restrictions in China. According to the organizational chart provided in the institutional report (p. 9), and a supplemental organization chart the team requested ([Appendix I](#)), the President is listed as the CAO, with the following offices and individuals reporting to her: Director of Assessment and Accreditation; President’s Operations; Director of Finance (listed on the website as NewSchool’s CFO, and not part of the AEI Finance & Accounting team); Technology; Facilities & Housing; Registrar (also not part of the AEI Registrar team); Enrollment & Admissions; Solution Center; Advising; Career Services; and the dean/heads of the four academic school/programs – Design; Integrative Studies; Architecture; and Construction Management. Right before the visit, the Dean of Student Engagement, responsible for the enrollment, admissions, and marketing functions listed above, left the college. The team learned during the visit that the marketing functions have not been replaced, and the Career Services Counselor was also leaving the institution.

The organization charts received and conversations with the institutional representatives made it clear that the shared services are under the management of the AEI CFO and Shared Services Operations Manager. As such, although NewSchool has staff members on-site who are responsible for some of the institutional functions (e.g. Director of Finance, Registrar), the ultimate oversight of these functions appears to lie with AEI and its CFO/Operations Manager, who does not report to the NewSchool president.

In the institutional report, NewSchool states that “while there may be several staff and faculty who interact with shared staff, the President is the ultimate decision-maker regarding how such services are integrated within NewSchool on an operational level to best support its students.” (p. 10) Despite this assurance, the team was unclear about who had ultimate authority over shared services: the shared services operations manager or the NewSchool president. Additionally, the institution acknowledges that the Board (currently has five members with one affiliated with Ambow) needs more members, and members with more diverse expertise to appropriately represent NewSchool’s interest. As such, the team recommends that NewSchool reviews its internal and external organizational and reporting structures, and clearly defines the relationship between the institution and the AEI shared service (see [Section III](#), Recommendation 5). The team recommends that NewSchool expand its board to ensure independent oversight and appropriate membership (see [Section III](#), Recommendation 6).

Finally, related to the governance and staff issues above, the team learned during the visit that regular performance reviews and staff development opportunities were either lacking or irregular (due to COVID and the leadership/staff changes), which contributed to the lack of clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of the staff. The team thus recommends the institution to address this concern by ensuring appropriate professional development for staff (see [Section III](#), Recommendation 8).

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

NewSchool provided a well-organized special visit report, and adequate evidence necessary for the team to evaluate how the institution addressed the issues identified by the WSCUC Commission and the previous accreditation team. The team offers the following commendations and recommendations to NewSchool.

#### **Commendations:**

The team commends the NewSchool of Architecture and Design for:

1. Demonstration of resilience in the face of a number of challenges – the COVID-19 pandemic, the change of ownership, internal leadership changes, enrollment management issues, and its optimism for the future.
2. Successful completion of a presidential search despite the long process and unexpected setbacks; NewSchool has identified a highly qualified and entrepreneurial leader.
3. Campus-wide readiness and enthusiasm – academic leadership, faculty, staff and students – to embrace the new leadership, and to adopt a fresh global perspective for outreach, network, and growth. Faculty, staff and students are uniformly excited about the new president’s appointment, and the energy, expertise, vision, and commitment she will bring to NewSchool.
4. Faculty commitment to student success and to engaging in quality assurance processes (assessment, program review) to improve student learning.
5. Awareness of and focused efforts to support educational currency and institutional operations with robust technological platforms and digital infrastructure.
6. Creation and implementation of a comprehensive faculty rank and advancement protocol.

#### **Recommendations:**

##### **Marketing, recruiting and retention:**

1. Accelerate the development of a strategic marketing, enrollment and retention plan with adequate resources, clear measurable targets, and metrics to monitor success. (CFRs 3.4, 4.6)
2. Create a growth plan for the institution addressing each of its degree programs to achieve budget efficiency and quality student educational experiences. (CFRs 3.4, 2.10, 2.11, 2.13)

**Financial sustainability:**

3. Develop a comprehensive resource and budgeting model that integrates with the strategic plan, focuses on long-term financial viability and robust student services, ensures expenditure reductions are appropriate and sustainable, and emphasizes traditional and alternative revenue generation. (CFR 3.4)
4. Monitor and optimize the implementation of the Service Level Agreement with Ambow Education Inc by setting performance metrics and regularly assessing the efficacy and quality of the services provided. (CFRs 2.13, 3.5)

**Institutional governance and decision-making:**

5. Define specific roles and responsibilities of staff and administration with a clear and transparent organizational and reporting structure, and clarify the relationship between the institution and its shared services provider. (CFR 3.7)
6. Prioritize the plans for future board expansion to ensure independence, competence, and appropriate membership composition to fulfill its responsibilities to the institution. (CFR 3.9, Governing Board Policy, Governing Board Policy Implementation Guide)

**Educational and Operational Effectiveness:**

7. Continue to strengthen institution-wide, systematic assessment and program review processes to ensure the quality of curricular and co-curricular offerings across all programs and departments. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.7)
8. Ensure appropriate professional development opportunities for staff. (CFR 3.3)

# APPENDIX I: NewSchool Organization Chart (April 2022)

