



March 11, 2013

CHAIR
Harold Hewitt
Chapman University

VICE CHAIR
William Ladusaw
University of California, Santa Cruz

Richard Bray
Schools Commission Representative

Ronald Carter
Loma Linda University

Christopher T. Cross
Public Member

Jackie Donath
California State University, Sacramento

John Etchemendy
Stanford University

Dianne Harrison
California State University, Northridge

Michael Jackson
University of Southern California

Roberts Jones
Public Member

Barbara Karlin
Golden Gate University

Margaret Kasimatis
Loyola Marymount University

Deborah Lieberman
University of La Verne

Julia Lopez
Public Member

Thomas McFadden
*Community and Junior Colleges
Representative*

Leroy Morishita
California State University, East Bay

Stephen Privett, S.J.
University of San Francisco

Sharon Salinger
University of California, Irvine

Sheldon Schuster
Keck Graduate Institute

Carmen Sigler
San Jose State University

Ramon Torrecilha
*California State University,
Dominguez Hills*

Leah Williams
Public Member

Paul Zingg
California State University, Chico

PRESIDENT
Ralph A. Wolff

Lorne M. Buchman
President
Art Center College of Design
1700 Lida Street
Pasadena, CA 91103

Dear President Buchman:

At its meeting February 20-22, 2013, the Commission considered the report of the team that conducted a Special Visit to the Art Center College of Design (ACCD) October 2-4, 2012. The Commission also had access to the ACCD Special Visit report and exhibits submitted by ACCD prior to the onsite review. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you and Provost Fred Fehlau. Your comments helped the Commission to understand more deeply the work that has continued under your leadership and the institution's plans for the future.

The Commission acknowledges the unusual nature of the review. Due to unanticipated circumstances, the WASC staff liaison changed shortly before the visit, and the team chair was unable to be onsite during the visit due to a family emergency. In consultation with the team chair, WASC staff, and institutional representatives, and in light of the institution's substantial investment in the Special Visit, it was decided to conduct the visit as scheduled. The Commission and the team thank ACCD's faculty, staff, students, and administration for their flexibility and accommodation in adapting to these unexpected complications.

ACCD's institutional report addressed five issues of concern to the Commission, as noted in its action letter dated March 3, 2010, following the fall 2009 EER visit: 1) strategic planning; 2) use of data in support of evidence-based decision making; 3) diversity in curriculum and culture; 4) role of faculty in governance; and 5) student learning assessment and program review. The scope of ACCD's report revealed a focused effort across the institution to respond to these issues.

While ACCD and the team both recognized that the institutional initiatives to address the Commission's concerns are still emerging, the strength of the foundation being laid was manifest. The team in particular commended ACCD for the following:

Strategic Planning. The ACCD Report stated that the institution had moved forward on strategic planning, and that "it could not have written (the report) three years ago." This assertion was verified by the team. It confirmed that the plan as presented in the ACCD report, and reviewed on site, is fully functioning and appears to provide "a solid platform on which ACCD can build its future." ACCD has effectively addressed the single largest issue before it and done so in a relatively brief period of time.

Evidence-based Decision Making. ACCD's creation of the Strategic Enrollment Management Committee and the Center for Educational Effectiveness and its hiring of a Director of Institutional Research represent substantial steps towards establishing decision-making processes that are infused with relevant data. ACCD has taken the initial steps necessary for institution-wide data analysis and development of a culture of evidence.

Diversity in Curriculum and Culture. The team noted that diversity was established as a pillar of the ACCD 2011 - 2016 Strategic Plan. By adopting the underlying philosophy of the AAC&U *Making Excellence Inclusive* initiative, and by directing significant funds toward a quasi-endowment to generate funds for diversity scholarships, the institution has demonstrated a firm commitment to its diversity efforts.

In receiving the team report, the Commission endorses the team's findings and recommendations, and highlights the following for continued institutional focus and development:

Role of Faculty in Governance. A key element of the March 3, 2010, Commission Action Letter was a recommendation that ACCD "formalize plans, systems, and processes" with respect to shared governance and support of faculty development. The team noted a multitude of activities undertaken to address this issue, but observed that "there is some concern about how all the moving parts will mesh together." The Commission expects the institution to review its bylaws, codify the current forms of faculty governance, and clarify leadership reporting lines. Priorities for the Centers devoted to teaching, learning, and student experience should be established. In particular, ACCD should communicate the logic for creating these new administrative arrangements so that all segments of the institutional community have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. (CFRs 3.3, 3.8, 3.11, 4.1, 4.6)

Student Learning Assessment and Program Review. Student learning assessment and program review remain in an emergent state. The Commission expects that the institution will establish a formalized assessment system that relates student learning to program learning outcomes; expand the work of institutional research; tie program review to budgeting and planning; and integrate outcomes across institutional, program, and course levels. This area should command a significant amount of effort in the ongoing development of institutional systems and processes. The Commission would note that these areas have been part of Commission Standards and expectations for well over a decade, and ACCD will need to demonstrate that it has fully addressed these issues as well as the new expectations of the *2013 Standards of Accreditation*. (CFRs 1.2, 2.3, 2.7, 2.11, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5)

In sum, as both the team report and institutional representatives acknowledged, much work has been done, but much remains.

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Special Visit report.
2. Remove the formal Notice of Concern.
3. Schedule the Offsite Review (under the new Institutional Review Process) for fall, 2016 and the Accreditation Visit for fall, 2017.
4. Request that the institution address the issues raised in the Special Visit report at the time of the Offsite Review, with particular attention to the items listed previously and the recommendations contained in the team report, as well as:

- a. The success of the 2011-2016 Strategic Plan;
- b. Pertinent documentation of data sets, their analysis, and their subsequent application in the context of evidence-based decision making;
- c. Specific examination of the evolution of the shared governance function; and
- d. Continued development of the assessment and program review activities, consistent with the team’s observations and recommendations.

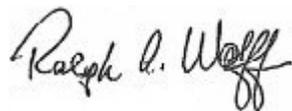
As ACCD works on the issues cited above, it should be mindful of the expectations that it will need to meet at the time of its next comprehensive review, which will take place under the revised Standards of Accreditation and institutional review process in the *2013 Handbook of Accreditation*. These expectations build on past practice and will include, for example, student success, quality improvement processes such as assessment and program review, planning, and financial sustainability. However, the *2013 Handbook* also includes new foci: the meaning, quality, and integrity of degrees; student performance in core competencies at the time of graduation; and more visionary institutional planning for the “new ecology” of learning. ACCD will need to familiarize itself with the *2013 Handbook* and to address both old and new expectations.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of Art Center College of Design’s governing board in one week. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the ACCD web site and widely disseminated throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement. The team report and the action letter will also be posted on the WASC website.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that the ACCD undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WASC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while assuring public accountability, and we are grateful for your continued support of our process.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Ralph A. Wolff
President

RW/co

cc: Harold Hewitt, Commission Chair
Fred Fehlau, ALO
Robert C. Davidson, Board Chair
Members of the Special Visit team
Christopher Oberg, Vice President