

March 3, 2021

Fr. Kevin O'Brien  
President  
Santa Clara University  
500 El Camino Real  
Santa Clara, CA 95053-0015

Dear President O'Brien:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning Santa Clara University (SCU) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting February 19, 2021. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Accreditation Visit to SCU October 7 – 9, 2020. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by SCU prior to the Offsite Review (OSR), the supplemental materials requested by the team after the OSR, and the institution's January 7, 2021 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Lisa Kloppenberg, Interim Provost and Professor of Law, and Ed Ryan, Vice Provost for Planning and Institutional Effectiveness. Your comments were very helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations. The date of this action constitutes the effective date of the institution's new status with WSCUC.

### **Actions**

1. Receive the Accreditation Visit team report
2. Reaffirm accreditation for a period of ten years
3. Schedule the next reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in spring 2030 and the Accreditation Visit in fall 2030
4. Schedule a Special Visit in spring 2024 to address:
  - a. progress on actions to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion.
  - b. identification and communication of appropriate benchmarks and priorities for strategic planning.
  - c. assessment of co-curricular and graduate programs.
  - d. clarification of faculty expectations for research, scholarship, creative activity, and service.
  - e. improved accessibility and affordability for students, faculty, and staff.

The Commission commends SCU in particular for the following:

1. Santa Clara exemplifies its Jesuit mission. All members of the university community – students, faculty, staff, trustees, and advisory boards – are well versed in mission, “speak Ignatian,” are dedication to *cura personalis*, to living lives for and with others, and to an understanding that each person is born with immutable dignity. The Centers of Distinction seat their work in the mission and partner with students and colleagues to deliver actions based in contemplation and intellectual reflection.
2. Academic programs are appropriate in content and standards of achievement. The university mission is aligned with individual school missions. Student learning outcomes are mission-driven, reflecting the vision and core values of the institution, and are established for all programs.
3. Santa Clara is committed to installing forward-thinking leaders who will position the institution to address current areas of concern and future challenges. The recent hires for president and provost join capable board members and a strong cabinet. The forthcoming appointments of a vice president for diversity, equity, and inclusion, and a vice president for mission and ministry, are eagerly anticipated by the campus community.

4. The emphasis on retaining and graduating students is supported by high-impact practices, sustained by a committed faculty, and evidenced by the narrowing of success gaps for historically underrepresented students. The Core curriculum, Pathways program, and Centers of Distinction are supplemented by a strong co-curricular program and exemplify Santa Clara's focus on delivering a unique, meaningful, high-value educational experience. A well-developed infrastructure for assessing student learning, particularly for undergraduates, assures continuous improvement of programs.
5. The institution's response to the COVID-19 emergency was comprehensive and effective. Santa Clara provided instructors, staff, and students with essential resources to ensure a rapid transition of instructional modalities from reliance on face-to-face methods to complete reliance on remote delivery. Academic Technology was instrumental in ensuring the success of this transition by providing essential just-in-time training and professional development opportunities for faculty. The faculty, in turn, exhibited an extraordinary willingness and ability to pivot and adapt quickly to a challenging, new pedagogical environment.
6. Santa Clara's financial position is strong. Its pre-COVID operating performance and outlook are solid, as evidenced by Moody's report. The institution took swift action to mitigate the immediate financial impact of the pandemic. Intermediate-term planning appears to support long-term sustainability and viability in the face of considerable uncertainty in the nation's economic outlook.
7. The Institution has, during the site visit and subsequent to it, communicated substantive plans and strong commitments to making improvements in the areas of concern noted by the Visiting Team.

The Commission requires the institution to respond to the following issues:

1. Continue progress on activities to support SCU's commitment to become an anti-racist institution and improve the campus climate for diversity, equity, and inclusion, including but not limited to
  - a. equipping the cabinet with the capacity to oversee the coordination of efforts to improve the campus climate related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
  - b. establishing priorities and goals for achieving systemic change, delineating expected or desired timelines for achieving appropriate markers, clarifying lines of accountability, and dedicating resources needed to ensure success.
  - c. ensuring the timely gathering of relevant data needed to judge progress.
  - d. providing appropriate support to students, staff, and faculty who identify as members of marginalized groups.
  - e. communicating progress and setbacks regularly to the campus community in a manner that facilitates engaged dialogue with all stakeholders. (CFRs 1.4, 2.10, 3.1; and WSCUC Equity and Inclusion Policy)
2. Complete the new strategic planning process, articulating clear goals and identifying appropriate benchmarks, along with priorities and timelines related to significant milestones that will be regularly assessed. Communicate progress to stakeholders as an essential component of this process. (CFRs 4.1, 4.2, and 4.6)
3. Commit sufficient resources to the assessment of co-curricular and graduate programs to be consonant with assessment of undergraduate programs. (CFR 2.11)
4. Address uncertainty among the faculty regarding expectations for research, scholarship, creative activity, and service. (CFRs 2.8 and 2.9)
5. Continue to explore and implement methods to improve accessibility and affordability for students, faculty, and staff. (CFRs 1.4, 1.6)

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirmed that SCU addressed the three Core Commitments and successfully completed the two-stage institutional review process conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. In keeping with WSCUC values, SCU should strive for ongoing improvement with adherence to all Standards of Accreditation and their associated CFRs to foster a learning environment that continuously strives for educational excellence and operational effectiveness.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter is being sent to the chair of SCU's governing board. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the SCU's website and widely distributed throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement and to support the institution's response to the specific issues identified in these documents. The team report and the Commission's action letter will also be posted on the WSCUC website. If the institution wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WSCUC will post a link to that response on the WSCUC website.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that SCU undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WSCUC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while contributing to public accountability, and we thank you for your continued support of this process. Please contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Jamiene S. Studley  
President

JSS/thh

Cc: Phillip Doolittle, Commission Chair  
Ed Ryan, ALO  
John Sobrato, Board Chair  
Members of the Accreditation Visit team  
Tamela Hawley, Vice President