

**REPORT ON THE  
STRUCTURAL CHANGE  
SITE VISIT**

Concordia University Irvine

Doctorate of Education

May 13, 2013

Team Roster

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The evaluation team in conducting its review was able to evaluate the institution under the Commission Standards and therefore submits this Report to the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for action and to the institution for consideration.

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## SECTION I. OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

### A. Description of the Institution and the Proposed Change

#### 1. Background Information

Concordia University Irvine (CUI) was established in southern California in 1972 following a history of 17 years since the idea was formed in 1955 and site was purchased in 1963. In 1976, classes began and the original Christ College Irvine achieved Western Association for Schools and Colleges (WASC) accreditation in 1981 followed by the name change to CUI in 1993. As a Lutheran University, CUI strives to provide a thoughtful and caring Christian community that strives to live out its Mission:

*Concordia University, guided by the Great Commission of Christ Jesus and the Lutheran Confessions, empowers students through the liberal arts and professional studies for lives of learning, service, and leadership.*

As confirmed by the President during the site visit, the intent of the Doctor of Education program is to impact education in Kindergarten through Grade12 schools for the future.

#### 2. Recent Accreditation History

CUI currently offers Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees as well as an accelerated second degree Bachelor of Science in Nursing (2007). Graduate programs include the Master of Arts in Coaching and Athletic Administration onsite (2005) and online (2008), Master of Arts in Education (2001), Master of Business Administration (1999), Master of Arts in Theology (1998), Master of Arts in Theology and Culture online (2013), and Master of International Studies (2004). The institution has been accredited continuously by WASC since 1981, with the last full WASC re-accreditation occurring in March 2006; since then six Regional Centers were approved.

#### 3. Proposed Change

In Spring 2013, Concordia University Irvine submitted a Substantive Change proposal to offer the Doctor of Education (EdD). This is the first program offered at the professional doctoral level, thus requiring both Substantive Change and Structural Change approvals. A Substantive Change panel reviewed the EdD proposal in April 2013 and recommended a Structural Change site visit.

The Substantive Change panel identified three issues for review to occur during the Structural Change site visit, specifically:

- Program business model and revised budget including enrollment assumptions, fiscal viability, and all program-related expenses;
- Preparations for support of a doctoral culture for students and faculty, including the dissertation research course and Faculty Handbook; and
- Review of CUI Student Handbook and admission expectations for students including those who have a baccalaureate and master's degree from CUI.

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

The visit team met with CUI's President, Provost, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Associate Provost, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Dean of the School of Education, EdD Program Director, Orange County Regional Director of the MA in Education Program, EdD Program Faculty and Dissertation Committee Chairs, Director of the MED/Credential Program, and Director of Graduate Admissions (for full schedule, see Appendix 1).

CUI representatives engaged in comprehensive interviews centered on the issues for review. As both team members had experience with doctoral programs, discussions also involved suggestions for future consideration. Prior to the visit, the team requested and received for review the Doctor of Education Faculty Handbook (draft), the Doctor of Education Student Handbook (draft), and the revised Doctoral Program Budget.

## **SECTION II. EVALUATION OF THE PROPOSED CHANGE**

The team reviewed the following three issues through interviews with CUI personnel (as identified in Appendix 1) and examination of accompanying documents:

### **A. Program Business Model**

The focus of this interview was to review the CUI doctoral program's business model, and the revised budget, including enrollment assumptions, fiscal viability, and all program-related expenses.

Discussions began with a confirmation of the University's preparedness for developing the doctoral program. The program was viewed as a critical investment to support CUI's mission. (CFRs 1.1, 4.2) In addition, the Chief Financial Officer verified that University funds were committed to the EdD program in the budget's current and future years.

The business model operates with one incoming cohort for the first year ( $n=18$ ), followed by two cohorts per year ( $n=16$  [attrition] +  $18 + 18$ ). The CFO demonstrated scenarios that illustrated the outcome if the projected numbers were not achieved. The team determined that the model is scalable and should projections not be fulfilled, appropriate downsizing in other areas would still adequately support the program. (CFR 3.5) The EdD program was designed to minimize the chances of attrition by providing student support systems beginning with admissions and continuing throughout coursework; enrollment assumptions used an 80% retention rate per cohort per year. (CFR 3.6)

Responses to questions confirmed CUI's research into and analysis of the market and their competitors, including costs to run a doctoral program. Funding allocation reflected the commitment to student and faculty conference attendance, as well as library support. Indications were conveyed that an annual three to five percent inflation increase might be incorporated.

Overall, enrollment projections and assumptions appear to be financially manageable and the program appears to be fiscally viable.

## **B. Doctoral Culture**

The visit team studied the CUI proposal, the EdD Faculty Handbook, and the EdD Student Handbook. They also discussed questions during a conference call and at the onsite meeting with CUI doctoral program faculty.

The conference call allowed the visit team to pose specific questions related to the establishment of a doctoral culture in relation to both students and faculty. The inherent brevity of the proposal format, the fact that the proposal represents CUI's first attempt to establish a doctoral program, and the lack of clarity in some parts of the student and faculty draft handbooks gave rise to questions about the institution's preparedness for the research mission of a doctoral program. In particular, the team wanted to know more about CUI's ability to articulate differences between research-based doctoral degrees and the more limited goals of master's programs, and the ability to realize doctoral-level goals in the policies and practices of the proposed EdD program. The site visit provided the opportunity for the visit team to meet with three administrators and three faculty members to discuss the research orientation of the EdD degree and the implications of this orientation for faculty as well as students.

Faculty discussed the distinctions between the MA and EdD program beginning with the admissions process and the required level of achievement for graduations. The purposeful way in which the dissertation is integrated into the curriculum from the very beginning and presented in manageable pieces is exemplary and makes it clear that a doctoral program is always aimed at this final piece of work. The fact that the budget includes funding for conference fees for students makes it clear that students are expected to engage the community of scholars as professional educational researchers, and not just go through the motions of earning their degrees passively. The release time and funding for faculty to conduct research, publish, and present their work sends the same important message about the level and type of scholarship. The visit team suggested the possibility of establishing a speakers' series that would allow students and faculty to engage with major scholars in the field. The discussion clarified virtually every issue. (CFRs 2.1, 2.2, 2.5, 3.2, 3.4) In addition, review of the onsite and online format revealed careful planning, based on successful past experiences, to support student growth and development throughout the program. Equivalent support was underway for faculty.

A diagram shared during discussions aptly explained the initially confusing "jigsaw puzzle" of the program schedule and faculty were encouraged to duplicate it in the handbooks. The CUI group clarified roles of the dissertation chair, methodologist, and reader and confirmed that each would serve purposefully in the process. The faculty expressed commitment to address the issue of student plagiarism in the handbooks, building upon the successful procedures used in the MA program as well as the intent to develop a student code of conduct. (CFRs 4.3, 4.6)

The planned trips to China and Washington, DC provide "value added" richness and depth to the educational experience and are likely to provide a distinct "brand" for the program. The visit team asked CUI to consider reworking the budget so that the China trip would be fully funded, presumably through tuition or a major gift, and could therefore be a genuine hallmark of the program, rather than only accessible to those with disposable income. The visit team believes that the trip will provide a global experience as well as a bonding opportunity for each cohort and a link across cohorts that could enhance CUI's reputation as a highly desirable place to earn an EdD. The research plan to have students use mixed quantitative/qualitative methodology is a challenge to be monitored and supported as it is based on the assumption that the ability to understand and present data in compelling ways is crucial to future administrators' success. (CFRs 2.5, 2.8, 2.9)

Commitment to develop an assessment culture to support the doctoral program was evident as faculty spoke of embedded outcomes that connect course to program to graduate level outcomes. Course signature assignments with assessment rubrics are designed to measure program learning outcomes competencies. An annual assessment of a random sample of student work will be used to determine inter-rater reliability of the rubric. A planned multi-level review of findings is intended to contribute to program improvement. (CFRs 1.2, 2.3, 4.6)

There are several School of Education (SOE) programs approved by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. That process requires program and biannual reports informed by the continuous assessment and data collection. (CFRs 4.3, 4.4) It is commendable that the assessment cycle of the EdD program is parallel to other SOE programs thereby providing a unit-wide SOE assessment.

### **C. Admission Expectations**

The visit team studied the CUI proposal, the EdD Faculty Handbook, and the EdD Student Handbook; and discussed questions about admissions expectations during a conference call and during a meeting of four administrators, including the director of graduate admissions, and one faculty member. The visit team had three concerns. One issue—the possible overlap between the master’s program and proposed EdD program—was fully addressed. The CUI team clarified the relationship of the master’s degree to the EdD so that concern of program redundancy raised in the conference call is no longer an issue. Accepting CUI master’s students and alumni is viewed as an appropriate pool of applicants. (CFR 2.1)

The establishment and sustainability of the program and the issue of English language competency were also discussed. Students who perform excellently at the master’s level may require additional linguistic resources to write a doctoral dissertation in good scholarly English. The visit team encouraged monitoring and action as needed. (CFRs 2.1, 2.12)

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

### **A. Findings**

The visit team finds that CUI has the resources to provide the financial stability to support the initiation of this program and that the financial plan provides realistic budgeting for the future. Plans to monitor the enrollment management using the scalable model will contribute to program sustainability. The University is committed through financial planning and programming to expanding their graduate culture by specifically identifying the requirements needed for the doctoral cohorts and doctoral faculty. Academic planning for the EdD purposefully defines the development of doctoral culture and supports a strong student academic experience. Admissions expectations are guardedly optimistic and will need to be monitored over time. The visit team recommends that the proposed structural change be approved.

### **B. Commendations and Recommendations**

The visit team commends Concordia University Irvine for their honest, open communication with WASC, responsiveness to requests for information, and receptiveness to developing their doctoral capacity. Leadership and teamwork towards the success of the EdD program is evident at all levels. (CFRs 1.9, 4.6)

The decision to build on the basis of the strong MA program while moving beyond it to the doctoral level contributed to the EdD program's planning success. The desire for student success both in the program and their future capacity to apply the EdD degree after graduation was evident in the dual methodology planning and dissertation development design.

The visit team recommends that CUI monitor the quality of students admitted to the program, the dual nature of the online and onsite student learning community, and continued commitment to the assessment of student learning outcomes. In addition, the visit team recommends that, as the EdD program evolves, a review of faculty workload in relationship to research expectations occurs.

## **APPENDIX 1: ED.D. STRUCTURAL CHANGE SITE VISIT AGENDA**

**Concordia University Irvine**

**Monday, May 13, 2013**

**Dahlgren Board Room, Robert Alan Grimm Hall**

(revised 5-8-13: changes indicated in *italics*)

### **Visiting Team:**

Sally Pratt, Vice Provost for Graduate Programs, University of Southern California  
Halyna Kornuta, Provost, John Paul the Great Catholic University

#### *8:30-9:30 am: Meeting on Program Business Model*

- Janice Nelson, Dean, School of Education
- Dwight Doering, Ed.D. Program Director
- Kevin Tilden, Executive Vice President & Chief Financial Officer
- Peter Senkbeil, Associate Provost & Accreditation Liaison Officer
- Discussion topics will include:
  - Enrollment projections and assumptions
  - Fiscal viability of the program
  - Review of revised program budget

#### *9:45-11:00 am: Meeting with Doctoral Program Faculty*

- Janice Nelson, Dean, School of Education
- Dwight Doering, Ed.D. Program Director
- Doug Grove, Assistant Provost for Adult, Graduate & Online Learning
- Ed.D. program faculty and dissertation committee chairs, including:
  - Margaret Christmas Thomas, Assistant Professor of Education
  - Kent Schlichtemeier, Professor, Coaching & Athletic Administration Program
  - Stephanie Hartzell, Assistant Professor of Education
- Discussion topics will include:
  - Establishing and supporting a doctoral culture
  - Methodology expectations for the dissertation
  - Review of Faculty Handbook

#### *11:15 am-12:00 pm: Meeting with Senior Administrators*

- Kurt Krueger, President
- Mary Scott, Executive Vice President & University Provost
- Peter Senkbeil, Associate Provost & Accreditation Liaison Officer

#### *12:00-1:30 pm: Lunch with Concordia Representatives*

#### *1:30-2:30 pm: Meeting with Program and Admissions Leaders*

- Janice Nelson, Dean, School of Education
- Dwight Doering, Ed.D. Program Director
- Jason Neben, Orange County Regional Director, MA in Education Program
- Deborah Mercier, Director, MED/Credential Program
- Rina Campbell, Director of Graduate Admissions
- Margaret Christmas Thomas, Assistant Professor of Education



- Discussion topics will include:
  - Expectations for Ed.D. students with a prior degree from Concordia University
  - Review of Student Handbook

2:30-3:30 pm: Break and Visiting Team Discussion

3:30-4:00 pm: Wrap-Up Meeting – Preliminary Comments