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Ralph A. Wolff

July 10, 2012

Pam Eibeck
President
University of the Pacific
3601 Pacific Avenue
Stockton, CA 95211

Dear President Eibeck:

At its meeting June 13-15, 2012 the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) team that conducted the visit to the University of the Pacific (Pacific) April 2-4, 2012. The Commission also had access to the EER report and exhibits submitted by Pacific prior to the visit, the institution's May 30, 2012 response to the visiting team report, and the documents relating to the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) visit conducted in spring 2010. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you and Provost and Accreditation Liaison Officer Maria Pallavicini. Your comments were helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations.

As noted below, the Commission found that the University had demonstrated compliance with Commission Standards, leading to action to reaffirm the University of the Pacific's accreditation with several areas identified for further attention and Commission review.

Pacific's institutional proposal for the comprehensive review outlined two broad themes, later modified with WASC staff approval, which featured three topics for the EER phase of the review process: student success, assessment of student learning, and program review. The Commission was pleased to see that, as mentioned in the team report, the institution's EER report was "clearly written and carried out in the spirit of serious inquiry." Pacific's full engagement over the entire comprehensive review is commendable.

The Commission's action letter of July 15, 2010 following the CPR visit highlighted four major issues for special attention before the EER visit: governance and leadership, faculty workload, student success, and assessment of student learning and program review. The visiting team found that these issues were appropriately addressed in the interval between the CPR and EER phases of the review, and the Commission agreed, noting that these issues were embedded in the modified EER report outline. The Commission urged continuing vigilance, particularly on the concerns about faculty workload, student success, and assessment of student learning and program review, as noted below.

The University of the Pacific is to be commended for the superior work in the assessment of student learning being conducted by the Office of Student Life. As noted by the team, Pacific has established "energetic and creative leadership in the practice of assessment across their many offices and programs." Likewise, the Commission was impressed by the University's emerging plans from the Strategic Task Force on Diversity and the work of the recently formed Institutional Effectiveness Committee, noting the team's finding of "innovative work on program review in the short time" since the CPR visit.

The Commission endorses the recommendations of the EER team and wishes to emphasize the following areas for further attention and development:

Strengthening systems of assessment and program review. As highlighted in the team report, Pacific “has come a very long way in developing a culture in support of learning assessment” in the two years since the CPR. Work has also progressed in refining a program review model that makes “the assessment of student learning a more central element in the program review process.” The Commission noted the effective use of the Assessment Working Group and the Institutional Effectiveness Committee in achieving a good level of progress, especially with regard to faculty ownership of these processes. However, the Commission noted that with unevenness in assessment practices and delays due to modifications in the program review model, considerable work remains to be done, including continued development in academic areas and verifiable results in emerging processes across the institution. For example, Pacific needs to demonstrate a coordinated, university-wide assessment plan at both undergraduate and graduate levels, fully articulated program review cycles showing the results of outcomes measurements and improvements that will enhance student learning, and further work in the assessment of university outcomes in general education beyond the successful Pacific Seminars. (CFRs 1.2, 2.3-2.7, 2.11, 4.4-4.6)

Enhancing student success and diversity. Pacific clearly has an institutional focus on student success that the visiting team believes “could be an area of distinction where Pacific could be a model of inclusive excellence.” New initiatives in transfer student success and an emerging diversity plan hold great promise for supporting this focus. The Commission also recognized the University’s commitment to socio-economic access and noted improvements in specialized programs for underrepresented students such as the Community Involvement Program, the SUCCESS TRIO support program and STEPS program for African-American students, begun in 2011. The Commission agreed with the team, however, that more determined efforts are needed in order to meet established goals. It expects the University to gather evidence regarding possible impediments to persistence, retention, and graduation, especially among underrepresented groups, including Latinos/as, African-Americans and the large and diverse Asian student population. Likewise, identifying best practices in success initiatives, assessing the effectiveness of student advisement, and improving student services that contribute to persistence are expected. (CFRs 1.2, 1.5, 2.2, 2.10-2.14, 4.5)

Establishing faculty workload guidelines. A key to excellence in teaching and learning is a clear understanding of the expectations of the University with regard to faculty, including preparation, student advisement, committee service, scholarship, service to the broader community, and ongoing assessment of academic programs in service to the mission. Given the academic culture at Pacific, it is incumbent upon the University to establish specific written policies relative to faculty workload. This is especially true in the case of an emerging culture of evidence at Pacific, which is predicated on the faculty’s coordination and continuing cultivation of assessment at course, program, and university levels. The Commission urged prompt attention to the creation of faculty workload policies across all levels and campuses. (CFRs 3.3)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness Review report and reaffirm the accreditation of the University of the Pacific.
2. Schedule the next comprehensive review with the off-site review in spring 2019 and the on-site visit tentatively scheduled for fall 2019.

3. Request an Interim Report in spring 2015 to report progress on the following issues cited in this action letter and the EER team report: (1) developing and implementing a comprehensive assessment system and effective program review process, (2) creating and evaluating initiatives related to student success and diversity, and (3) establishing faculty workload policies. Progress should be demonstrated as defined above.

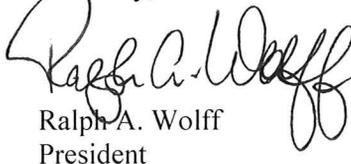
In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that the University of the Pacific has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness, and has successfully completed the three-stage review conducted under the Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review, the institution is expected to continue its progress, particularly with respect to educational effectiveness and student learning.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of Pacific's governing board in one week.

In keeping with WASC policy adopted in November 2011, this letter and the underlying team report also will be posted on the WASC website on Friday, July 13. If you wish to post a response to the letter and/or team report on your own website, WASC will also post a link to that response on its website. Any link that you wish to provide should be forwarded to the attention of Teri Cannon so that it may be included on the WASC website. As noted in the Commission policy, team reports and action letters are foundational for institutional accountability and improvement. Institutions are expected to disseminate these documents throughout the institution for the purposes of promoting ongoing engagement and improvement and encouraging internal communications about specific issues identified in team reports and action letters.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that the University of the Pacific 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/kb

cc: Linda Johnsrud, Commission Chair
Maria Pallavicini, ALO
Kathleen Lagorio Janssen, Board Chair
Members of the EER team
WASC Liaisons: Diane Harvey and Keith Bell