

March 9, 2018

Dr. Susan Rounds  
President  
Dharma Realm Buddhist University  
4951 Bodhi Way  
Ukiah, CA 95482

Dear President Rounds:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning Dharma Realm Buddhist University (DRBU) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting February 14-16, 2018. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 to DRBU November 15-17, 2017. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by DRBU prior to the Seeking Accreditation Visit 2. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues: Franklyn Wu, ALO; Bhikshuni Heng Chih, Board Chair; Martin Verhoeven, Dean of Academics; and Douglas M. Powers, Vice President of Finance and Administration. 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 Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 team report
2. Grant Initial Accreditation for a period of six years
3. Schedule the reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in Spring 2023 and the Accreditation Visit in Fall 2023
4. Schedule the Mid-Cycle Review May 1, 2020

### **Commendations**

The Commission commends Dharma Realm Buddhist University in particular for the following:

1. The welcoming spirit and warm hospitality and the institution's thorough compilation and presentation of supporting documents, participation in all team meetings, and candid responses to the team's questions.
2. A well written and organized report that focused on the CFRs identified in the recommendations from the 2016 Commission Action Letter (CAL), specifically CFRs 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 3.7, 4.3, and 4.4. There was widespread participation that included several committees that engaged in the process; gathered, analyzed, and provided evidence; and reflected on their findings.
3. The institution's efforts in conducting three self-studies: one on the MA program, and two on co-curricular units (Academic Resource Center and Co-Curricular Programs and Activities) and for carrying out the external review visit of the MA program in a tight timeframe prior to the SAV 2 visit. These reviews have resulted in the identification of areas of concern with accompanying initial plans for improvement.
4. Creating and initiating a comprehensive presidential review process that enables all constituents to participate in assessing the performance of the president every four years and ensuring that the board is providing the president with an annual evaluation.

5. Strongly integrating scholarship and creative activity into faculty evaluations, the Professor Plan of Employment, and the Faculty Handbook, as well as for engaging students in scholarly and creative activities. The conversations on scholarship, as it relates to DRBU's mission and values, have critically examined the traditional assumptions and definitions of scholarship.
6. The thoughtful and effective implementation of an assessment framework, characterized by intense institution-wide participation and reflection on how to use the results for programmatic improvement.
7. An exemplary shared governance processes and practices in which all members of the university community can participate meaningfully in decision-making.
8. Consistent, productive, and collaborative strategic planning, resulting in successful renovation of an important facility in fall 2017 and plans to align recommendations resulting from program reviews with strategic planning and budgetary processes.

## Recommendations

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

1. Move forward with reviewing and implementing the recommendations cited in the MA program's external reviewers' team report, complete the process articulated in the DRBU Academic Program Review Handbook, and apply the same review processes for a program review of the BA program in 2019. (CFR 2.4)
2. Continue to develop and refine the comprehensive review process, while developing and implementing an annual presidential review. (CFR 3.7) This effort should be led by the Board, ensuring the process to be fair, independent, and objective, using the WSCUC Governing Board Policy Implementation Guide.
3. Continue to foster a clear understanding of the board role in a higher education organization, CEO evaluation, and conflicts of interest, using outside help such as that provided by the Association of Governing Boards (AGB). (CFR 3.9)

In taking this action to grant Initial Accreditation, the Commission confirms that Dharma Realm Buddhist University has addressed the three Core Commitments and has successfully completed the institutional review process for Initial Accreditation conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review for reaffirmation, the institution is encouraged to continue its progress, particularly with respect to student learning and success.

Accreditation status is not granted retroactively. Dharma Realm Buddhist University must use the following statement if it wishes to describe its accreditation status publicly:

*Dharma Realm Buddhist University is accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), 985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100, Alameda, CA 94501, 510.748.9001.*

The accredited status of a program should not be misrepresented. The accreditation granted by WSCUC refers to the quality of the institution as a whole. Because institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program at the institution, statements such as "this program is accredited" or "this degree is accredited" are incorrect and misleading. The phrase "fully accredited" is also to be avoided, since no partial accreditation is possible.

The Commission stipulates that this action encompasses the Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts and the Master of Arts in Buddhist Classics degrees offered by Dharma Realm Buddhist University at the time of this action. Any proposed new degree programs, off-campus sites, online offerings, and/or changes in governance or ownership require review and approval through the Substantive Change process. Degree programs that have been reviewed and included under this action may be extended to other currently approved campuses of the institution without prior Substantive Change action. Offerings at new locations may need to go through Substantive Change approval, in accordance with the requirements stated in the Substantive Change manual.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of Dharma Realm Buddhist University'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 Dharma Realm Buddhist University'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 Dharma Realm Buddhist University 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,



Jamienne S. Studley  
President

JSS/lw

Cc: Reed Dasenbrock, Commission Chair  
Franklyn Wu, ALO  
Bhikshuni Heng Chih, Board Chair  
Members of the Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 team  
Lori Williams, Vice President