

June 30, 2017

Dr. Michael Beals  
President  
Vanguard University of Southern California  
55 Fair Drive  
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Dear Dr. Beals:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning Vanguard University of Southern California (VUSC) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting June 21-23, 2017. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Accreditation Visit to VUSC, February 28-March 2, 2017. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by VUSC prior to the Offsite Review (OSR), the supplemental materials requested by the team after the OSR and the institution's April 18, 2017 response to the team report. The Commission noted your commitment to aligning enrollment planning and recruitment with strategic, operational, and financial planning, improving the tracking and monitoring of student complaints, and improved documentation and communication of resource allocation decisions.

The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues: Doretha O'Quinn, Provost, Jeremy Moser, CFO, Kim Johnson, VP EM, and Ludmila Praslova, ALO. 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 eight years
3. Schedule the next reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in Fall 2024 and the Accreditation Visit in Spring 2025
4. Schedule the Mid-Cycle Review in Spring 2021
5. Schedule a Special Visit in Fall 2020 to address:
  - Progress in completing the alignment of enrollment planning and recruitment with strategic and financial planning (CFRs 3.4, 4.6, 4.7);
  - Progress in diversifying revenue streams, growing enrollment, and increasing the endowment (CFR 3.4);
  - Completion of the integration and implementation of strategic and operational plans built on the strategic and continuous planning model (CFRs 4.3, 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7).
  - Progress on ensuring support services targeted at closing the achievement gap for students of color, particularly Hispanic students which is the largest growing student group (CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.13)

- Progress on increasing the number and diversity of faculty and staff sufficient to support students' and programmatic needs (CFR 3.1, WSCUC Diversity Policy);

## **Commendations**

The Commission commends VUSC in particular for the following:

1. Clearly articulated and aligned mission, vision, and values in support of student success;
2. An independent, engaged, and committed Board of Trustees and the employment of a qualified, experienced senior administrative team;
3. A collaborative, dedicated, and qualified faculty and staff who have supported the university as it has experienced financial stresses and have fully engaged in advancing the mission, vision, and values of Vanguard;
4. The adoption of a strategic and continuous planning model aligned with the University's mission, vision, and values and focused on assisting Vanguard in responding to a changing higher education environment in the decade ahead;
5. The improvement of Vanguard's financial status over the past five years including a significant increase in unrestricted net assets, the significant reduction in liabilities, and improved key financial ratios;
6. An improvement in the overall retention rate since 2010-11, using methods such as targeted interventions for at-risk students;
7. The development and implementation of a systematic review and yearly assessment process, completed specific, credible assessments for the five competencies, and articulated levels of performance at graduation.

## **Recommendations**

The Commission identifies the following issues for further development:

1. The alignment of enrollment planning and recruitment with strategic and financial planning (CFRs 3.4, 4.6, 4.7);
2. The acceleration of timelines to improve the diversification of revenue streams, grow enrollment, and further advance endowment growth (CFR 3.4);
3. The acceleration of timelines for the full integration and implementation of strategic and operational plans that are built upon the strategic and continuous planning model (CFRs 4.3, 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7);
4. Increasing the number and diversity of faculty and staff sufficient to support students' and programmatic needs (CFR 3.1, WSCUC Diversity Policy);
5. Addressing morale issues among faculty and staff (CFR 3.3).
6. Standardizing University-wide methods of tracking, monitoring, and responding to student complaints and disputes (CFRs 2.10, 2.13);

7. Aligning the program review process and budget allocation process and ensure that resource decisions made through the program review process are communicated clearly and in a timely manner (CFR 3.7).
8. Ensure support services targeted at closing the achievement gap for students of color, particularly Hispanic students which is the largest growing student group (CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.13)

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that VUSC has addressed the three Core Commitments and has successfully completed the two-stage institutional review process 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.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of VUSC'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 VUSC'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 VUSC 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,



Mary Ellen Petrisko  
President

MEP/ thh

Cc: William A. Ladusaw, Commission Chair  
Doretha O'Quinn, ALO  
Doug Green, Board Chair  
Members of the Accreditation Visit team  
Tamela Hawley, Vice President