

July 8, 2016

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

Dear Dr. 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 on June 24, 2016. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 to DRBU on March 22-24, 2016. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by DRBU prior to the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 and the institution's May 6, 2016 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues: Martin Verhoeven, Dean of Academics; Bhikshuni Heng Chi, Chair, Board of Trustees; and Franklyn Wu, Accreditation Liaison Officer. 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 1 team report
2. Grant Candidacy for Accreditation for five years, until June 24, 2021
3. Schedule a Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 in fall 2017

### **Commendations**

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

1. The institutional report submitted by DRBU was an extremely well written, engaging report, thoughtfully organized around the Standards and reflective of the university's deep commitment to and high regard for the accreditation process.
2. DRBU engaged the entire university community- faculty, students, staff, administrators, and trustees-in preparations for the visit, and everyone responded graciously and openly to the team's questions and requests before and throughout their time on campus.

3. The university has established a reliable financial reporting system and a budgeting process that monitors actual revenue and expenditures. These systems and processes enable DRBU to stay on a successful financial track.

4. DRBU faculty and student affairs staff demonstrate and practice an ethic of care that is grounded in the university's mission and values and is captured in the institutional learning outcomes (ILO 1 ). This ethic is visible in all aspects of the student's experience ( classroom, student conferences, residential life, work-study program, student activities, etc.). The team noted that by virtue of its pedagogical model and the cohort mentoring role, DRBU focuses on students regarding both their academic progress and their personal growth. Moreover, students participate in institutional change and contribute regularly to decision-making processes.

5. Finally, the Commission commends DRBU for its development and ongoing support of a community that is remarkably engaged in old and new ideas, consistently open to fresh perspectives, and creative in advancing the university's mission on and off the campus. The university's connection to the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association's monastery provides a rare and inspiring learning environment as well as collaborations and opportunities that enrich both organizations.

#### Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

The Commission finds that Dharma Realm Buddhist University has demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 1 at a level sufficient for Initial Accreditation.

The Commission identified the following issues for further development:

#### Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objective through Core Functions

The Commission finds that that the institution has demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 2 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, and that CFRs 2.6, 2.7, 2.8 require further work, as described in the following:

- CFR 2.6, 2. 7 - As DRBU grows and develops it will need to refine its program review protocol and conduct a comprehensive and highly participatory program review of both academic and co-curricular programs.
- CFR 2.8 - DRBU has developed a unique model of Great Books education. As faculty are encouraged to engage in a broad range of scholarly and research activity, the university may want to consider providing particular support to encourage them to publish and present papers on the nature and benefit of the institution's pedagogy. In addition, faculty scholarship needs to be a significant part of faculty review that incorporates the evaluation of both junior and senior faculty members and aligns faculty evaluation with the process for appointing and reappointing faculty. The university should document all faculty policies and processes in a centralized location such as the Faculty Governance Manual to provide DRBU with a clear and comprehensive model of faculty review.

Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

The Commission finds that that the institution has demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 3 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, and that CFR 3.7 requires further work, as described in the following:

- CFR 3.7 - While DRBU has started to develop a process for review of the President, the process needs to be fully articulated and appropriately shared.

Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

The Commission finds that that the institution has demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 4 at a level sufficient for Candidacy, and that CFRs 4.3 and 4.4 require further work, as described in the following:

- CFR 4.3, 4.4- DRBU needs to implement and complete a program review process through which faculty, staff, and the administration gather and analyze student learning data, and through which they make changes as deemed appropriate for increasing student learning. Further, DRBU will provide evidence that the findings from these inquiries are being applied to the design and improvement of curricula, pedagogy, and assessment methodology.

In taking this action to grant Candidacy, the Commission confirms that Dharma Realm Buddhist University has met the WSCUC Standards at least at a minimal level. The Commission has scheduled the Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 for the fall of 2017.

Institutions granted the status of Candidate for Accreditation must use the following statement if they wish to describe that status publicly:

*"[Institution name] has been recognized as a Candidate for Accreditation by WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), 985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite JOO, Alameda, CA 94501, 510. 748.9001. This status is a preliminary affiliation with the Commission awarded for a maximum period of five years. Candidacy is an indication that the institution is progressing toward Accreditation. Candidacy is not Accreditation and does not ensure eventual Accreditation. "*

Federal law requires that the WSCUC address and phone number appear in your catalog.

Institutions granted Candidacy are required to:

1. Submit an Annual Report in the format required by the Commission

2. Keep the Commission informed of any significant changes or developments, especially those that require prior approval according to the Commission's Substantive Change Policy. Dharma Realm University is approved to offer only the Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts and the Master of Arts in Buddhist Classics at its current location.

Please consult the Substantive Change Manual and confer with your WSCUC liaison about any proposed new degree programs, off-campus sites, online offerings, and/or changes in governance or ownership, to determine if these matters should be approved in advance by WSCUC.

3. Pay Annual Membership Dues prorated from the date of this action. An Annual Dues statement will be sent under separate cover.

In keeping with WSCUC review protocols, the required subsequent review and Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 will focus only on those issues identified under each Standard (above) deemed to require additional development. (Please also reference the team report for additional context for the Commission's findings.)

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 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.

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,



Mary Ellen Petrisko  
President  
MEP/ gc

Cc: Bill Ladusaw, Commission Chair  
Franklyn Wu, ALO  
Bhikshuni Heng Chi, Board Chair  
Members of the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 Team  
Douglas Powers, Vice President, Dharma Realm Buddhist University