



March 11, 2013

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Derry Connolly
President
John Paul the Great Catholic University
10174 Old Grove Road
San Diego, CA 92131

Dear President Connolly:

At its meeting February 20-22, 2013, the Commission considered the report of the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) team that conducted the visit to John Paul the Great Catholic University (JPCU) on September 26-28, 2012. The Commission also reviewed the CPR report submitted by the university prior to the visit and your comprehensive response to the team report, dated November 20, 2012. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and Provost and ALO Halyna Kornuta. Your observations were very helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations.

As required for initial accreditation, JPCU took a comprehensive approach to the review process, focusing on the four Standards of Accreditation. The Capacity and Preparatory Review for Initial Accreditation focused on each of the Standards, including comments on all Criteria for Review (CFRs) under the respective Standards. In addition, the self-study provided a thorough review of the progress made since the last interaction with WASC (the CPR and Educational Effectiveness Review [EER] for Candidacy) relative to recommendations, actions, and impact on the institution. The CPR report followed the outline established in the Letter of Intent, and the visiting team found the report to be "clearly organized, well written, and elegantly presented."

The Commission commends the university for its thorough attention to concerns stated in the Commission's action letter of March 7, 2011, and to the Standards and CFRs. JPCU has worked diligently through the protocols for Initial Accreditation. This was particularly evident by way of your response letter in the extensive analysis of all the team report recommendations, and which also noted actions needed and planned by the institution. Relating that analysis to the issues mentioned in this letter will be critical.

John Paul Catholic is to be commended specifically for several positive developments since the last WASC interaction:

Managing the Pathway to Initial Accreditation. John Paul Catholic University has admirably directed its efforts in the application process for Initial Accreditation by responding to WASC recommendations. The university demonstrated stewardship of financial resources aligned with the work of an effective Strategic Planning Committee. The governing board's engagement with planning and in critical areas of leadership has been a key to maintaining a strong commitment to the institutional mission and values.

Establishing a Culture of Learning and Success. Of paramount importance to institutions of higher education is a commitment to student learning and success. JPCU is achieving an impressive record in this regard by developing mechanisms for the assessment of learning and program review linked to institutional outcomes. Of particular interest to the Commission were the support resources provided for student learning and success in the university's Personal Plans for Success program, the "authentic learning that JPCU fosters for its students...in practical settings that impact the broader community," and in the provision for developing expertise in the assessment of learning through professional development of full- and part-time faculty and staff.

The Commission would remind JPCU that achieving Initial Accreditation means that the institution meets all Standards at a substantial level, and that the institution will need to demonstrate further development and sustainability in both capacity and educational effectiveness. The Commission endorses the seven recommendations of the CPR visiting team and wishes to emphasize the following areas for continued attention and development, especially in anticipation of the Educational Effectiveness Review:

Maturing in the Context of Higher Education. While the university has demonstrated appropriate responses to the Commission's action letters during Candidacy, work remains as the institution continues its progress toward Initial Accreditation. The Commission urges JPCU to embrace fully the culture of higher education by continuing board development activities, especially noting newly adopted guidelines for an independent governing board; affiliating itself with higher education associations where appropriate; facilitating shared governance; continuing the development of academic and administrative policies and procedures; and clarifying the roles of faculty, administration and staff in accordance with best practices in higher education. As noted in the team report, it is vitally important "to demonstrate that a culture of higher education has taken deep root at the institution" by transforming the university's "short-term...focus" into that of an institution keenly aware of the broader challenges of the university arena. (CFRs 1.3, 1.6, 3.3, 3.8, 3.9, 3.11, 4.6, 4.7)

Strengthening Strategic Planning. A vital component of the institution's progress in achieving Initial Accreditation is effective and comprehensive strategic planning. While the visiting team was encouraged to find an improved plan that "articulates more reasonable institutional goals and...reference[s] data and evidence," the Commission expects an even stronger planning process, especially as JPCU emerges from its nascent stage. As stated in WASC Standard 4, strategic planning and thinking must include the involvement of all members of the university community and other stakeholders; effective planning sets priorities for future direction that are aligned with institutional purposes, and are monitored, assessed, and revised as needed. In addition, plans should align academic, personnel, fiscal, physical, and technological resources and be informed by data and other evidence. It will be essential for JPCU to move from what the

visiting team identified as “short-term tactics, rather than a coherent agenda” toward more sophisticated longer-term planning. (CFRs 4.1-4.5)

Strengthening Systems of Assessment and Program Review. The Commission was pleased to learn from the visiting team’s report that the university has actively pursued the assessment of student learning and the creation of a workable program review process, including the development of “meaningful linkages between courses within programs and mapping course-level learning outcomes to program and institutional learning outcomes.” At the same time, however, the Commission is concerned that assessment procedures and quality assurance processes may not be consistently understood and implemented across the institution, and may require significant further development. The Commission is encouraged that a well-qualified provost is now working actively to promote and put in place systems of assessment and program review that are based on best practices in higher education. Care should also be taken to include co-curricular activities and student services in these institutional processes. (CFRs 1.2, 2.3-2.7, 4.3, 4.4, 4.8)

The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Capacity and Preparatory Review report of John Paul the Great Catholic University.
2. Continue the institution in Candidacy.
3. Reschedule the Educational Effectiveness Review for Initial Accreditation from spring 2014 to fall 2014. The Institutional Report is due 12 weeks prior to the scheduled visit.
4. Request that the institution incorporate its response to the issues raised in this action letter and to the major recommendations of the CPR team report into its Educational Effectiveness Review report. You may include this analysis in an appendix to your EER report or incorporate it into the report narrative.

In extending the timeframe for the Educational Effectiveness Review, the Commission hopes to provide the institution with time to build upon its progress to date, so that by the time of the Educational Effectiveness Review, John Paul the Great Catholic University will be able to demonstrate that it has improved its educational effectiveness efforts, is utilizing embedded assessments of student learning, has completed at least a sample of comprehensive program reviews, has captured additional student success data (including graduation rates), has improved strategic planning processes including measurable outcomes linked to key indicators, and has further strengthened the university’s shared governance model.

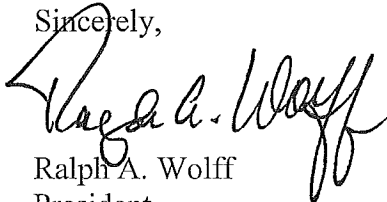
In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of JPCU’s governing board in one week. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be widely disseminated throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement, and to support the institution's response to the specific issues identified in them. The team report and Commission action letter will also be posted on the WASC website. If the

institution wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WASC will post a link to that response.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that the university 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ralph A. Wolff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ralph" being more prominent.

Ralph A. Wolff
President

RW/kb

cc: Harold Hewitt, Commission Chair
Halyna Kornuta, ALO
Alan Lane, Board Chair
Members of the CPR team
Keith Bell, Visit Staff Liaison