WASC Senior College and University Commission



March 7, 2014

Dr. James Doti
President
Chapman University
One University Drive
Orange, CA 92866

Dear President Doti:

At its meeting February 19–21, 2014, the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) considered the report of the review team that conducted the Accreditation Visit (AV) to Chapman University ("Chapman") October 21–23, 2014. The Commission also had access to the institutional report prepared by Chapman University prior to the Offsite Review (OSR), to any supplemental materials requested by the team following the OSR, and to the institution's December 18, 2013 response to the visiting team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you and your colleagues Daniele Struppa, Chancellor, and Joseph Slowensky, Vice Chancellor for Institutional Effectiveness and Faculty Affairs. Your comments were helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations.

Since this reaffirmation review was conducted in keeping with the *2013 Handbook of Accreditation,* the institution was expected to address several components in its institutional report. The institutional report and the review itself were part of the pilot effort undertaken by WSCUC and certain institutions in order to explore the new review process. Chapman University elected to organize its report into five major sections, based on the instructions for pilot institutions:

1. Introduction
2. Essays 1 and 2 (combined): Defining the meaning of your degrees and ensuring their quality and integrity; achieving "graduation proficiencies" (core competencies)
3. Essay 3: Defining and promoting "student success"
4. Essay 4: Ensuring institutional capacity and effectiveness in the future and planning for the changing environment for higher education
5. Integrative Essay

This report and the accompanying attachments were explored and discussed by the review team at its Offsite Review on April 29–30, 2013. As a result of that effort, the institution was asked to respond to the team's Lines of Inquiry,

requesting elaboration on the original documents. The supplemental documents received and the original institutional report formed the basis for the campus visit.

The team found the report, its appendices, and the supplemental response to the Lines of Inquiry to be evidence-based, insightful, and cohesive. The introduction provided a detailed institutional context complete with buttressing data exhibits. The team gained an appreciation for the history of the institution and for its significant development over the last decade.

In reviewing the section on the meaning of the degree and graduation proficiencies (Essays 1 and 2 combined), the team determined that Chapman had achieved a multitude of successes and provided for a similar multitude of opportunities. Specific program outcomes, their mapping to individual courses, and the process and results of assessment are readily available to both internal and external constituencies. Institutional themes are aligned with student learning outcomes. The assessment process is highly developed, with established protocols, standard forms, available training sessions, and rich faculty engagement. There is a well-established program review process, which culminates in a detailed Chancellor's letter directing the implementation of improvements based on the review. The General Education program is both developmental and integrative in the way that it ties disparate elements together in a continuum of improvement, and the curriculum development and approval process is grounded in the requisite faculty initiative and ownership.

With respect to student success (Essay 3), the team noted the emphasis of the institution on student engagement in a broader community and the significant efforts taken by the Student Affairs staff to understand the complete student experience. One of those vectors is student satisfaction, which has received increasing attention from the institution. Chapman has the necessary tools, and is using them, to track retention and graduate rates. Finally, the institution's expanded emphasis on graduate education has resulted in the allocation of significant resources to manage and integrate this level of learning.

Essay 4, on capacity and effectiveness, documented an enviable profile of financial and physical plant assets. The institution has achieved remarkable fiscal and building growth and has the tools to monitor whether this success is continuing. The formal educational effectiveness infrastructure is well established and functions well. The institution has identified the major issues it believes will be on the changing landscape of higher education, especially as they relate to institutional vitality. There is abundant documentation that faculty are widely engaged in the life of Chapman.

The final, integrative essay focused on strategic initiatives. The team determined that there was "considerable internal consistency across these themes, especially

that of a distinctive, personalized education for each student." Finally, the team noted that campus climate is an area for greater exploration.

Chapman University is to be commended for:

**Data-driven Strategic Planning.** From planning for new buildings through disciplined analysis of financial trends to creation of new programs, the institution is exemplary in the way it conducts its planning and implementation of both new initiatives and regular operations. This includes the impressive attention paid to physical plant infrastructure and technological capacity.

**Broad Engagement in Assessment for Continuous Improvement.** The institution's processes for assessment are rich and varied and reach deeply across the campus. Of particular note is the high level of faculty involvement in and the implementation of recommended changes issuing from program review.

**Administrative Coherency.** Chapman's administrative infrastructure is reasoned, systematic, and intelligible. There is a consistency of shared purpose and vision across the institution, which supports strategic efforts yet, as noted by the team, still retains "the ability to respond creatively and flexibly to external opportunities and the needs of the campus community."

**Highly Developed Faculty Governance Structures.** The core of the academic enterprise is the learning/teaching axis, and Chapman evidences high levels of satisfaction among its faculty in the critical area of managing curricula and programs. Principles and policies are highly developed and consistently practiced, leading to an open environment with broad faculty participation.

**Focus on the Total Student Experience**. Specific attention is given to the complete student experience, rather than to simply the academic or co-curricular aspect of student life.

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

**Broader Dissemination of, and Engagement with, Data, Analyses, and Conclusions.** The rich environment of assessment, in the report of the team, provides for the possibility that "the committees that oversee assessment processes may want to collaborate in disseminating findings and holding broader campus discussions about the environment for learning based on both disaggregated data and summary data." A general theme of the team report was the call for the expansion and application of existing efforts; for example, the fact that "transfer retention and graduate rates are…lower than for first-time

freshmen (while) programs that have been created to aid retention / graduation are primarily geared towards first year students" would suggest the engagement of the appropriate constituencies to address this finding. The institution is encouraged to expand application of its multiple analytical tools to constituencies beyond the senior leadership teams. (CFRs 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.10, 4.8)

**Continued Attention to Monitoring Key Institutional Variables.** As a tuition-driven institution, Chapman University is particularly dependent on enrollment in ensuring the overall financial health of the institution. Additionally, the plan to assume greater debt for the expansion of the physical plant will have a significant impact on the institution's overall financial profile. The institution has excellent tools in place to manage both tuition and debt and should maintain its discipline in using these tools to monitor, assess, and adapt as analysis indicates. (CFRs 1.3, 3.9, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)

**Refining Campus Perceptions of Diversity.** The team noted that "quantitative and qualitative data…indicate that there are many employees who believe that Chapman University is not a place that values diversity." This perception is inconsistent with the expressed intent – through both policy and practice – of the institution, as evidenced by the team's review of documents and interactions with faculty, staff, and students. The institution is encouraged to address this perception and expand, document, and analyze its efforts to achieve greater diversity. (CFR 1.5)

**Recalibration of Faculty Promotion and Tenure Processes.** Chapman University has an enviable "array of professional development opportunities, including mentoring, workshops, travel support, and internal grants." As the expectation has risen for greater productivity in research and creative scholarship – supported by those professional development opportunities – it is necessary to refine and communicate the appropriate standards of performance by which faculty will be evaluated. (CFRs 2.8, 3.3)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Team Report and reaffirm the accreditation of Chapman University for a period of nine years.

2. Schedule the next comprehensive review with the Offsite Review in spring 2022 and the Accreditation Visit tentatively scheduled for fall 2022.

3. Schedule a Mid-Cycle Review for spring 2019: http://www.wascsenior.org/resources/mid-cycle_review.

4. Request an Interim Report in spring 2017 documenting the institution's efforts to achieve greater diversity, as noted previously.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that Chapman University has satisfactorily addressed the three Core Commitments to Student Learning and Success; Quality and Improvement; and Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Accountability, and has successfully completed the multi-stage review conducted under the 2008 Standards of Accreditation, according to the 2013 Pilot Review Process. Between this action and the time of the next review, 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 Chapman 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 Chapman University's web site and 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 the action letter also will be posted on the WSCUC website.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that Chapman University undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WSCUC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while assuring public accountability, and we are grateful 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 and Executive Director

MEP/gc

Cc: Harold Hewitt, Jr., WSCUC Chair
Doy B. Henley Board Chair
Joseph Slowensky, ALO
Members of the reaffirmation team
Christopher Oberg, WSCUC Staff Liaison