

June 30, 2017

Dr. David Matsumoto  
Chief Executive Office  
Institute of Buddhist Studies  
2140 Durant Avenue  
Berkeley, CA 94707

Dear Dr. Matsumoto:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) 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 Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 to IBS February 28 – March 2, 2017. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by IBS prior to the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 and the institution's May 10, 2017 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you, and your colleague, Scott Mitchell, Dean of Students and Faculty Affairs. 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 a period of five years
3. Schedule a Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 in fall 2019

#### **Commendations**

The Commission commends IBS in particular for the following:

1. The institution's responsiveness to accreditation and the amount of work the institution has accomplished since deciding to seek WSCUC accreditation in response to changes in the California Education Code that require all degree-granting institutions in the State to achieve national or regional accreditation by July 1, 2020 and in meeting the findings of the BPPE;
2. The honesty and openness of all of IBS' interactions with WSCUC and other regulatory bodies;
3. The faculty's commitment to engage in scholarship, which is exceptional given the heavy teaching and administrative loads that they carry and demonstrates their dedication to students and the enterprise of teaching and learning in the Buddhist tradition;
4. The willingness of all members of the institution to engage in broad dialogue, solicit diverse perspectives, and consider new approaches, which will serve IBS well on its journey toward accreditation.
5. IBS is to be commended for its commitment to improvement. A resounding note throughout the institutional report was a universal desire to see IBS embrace accreditation as a means to that improvement.

The Commission identified the following issues for further development:

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

The Commission finds that IBS has demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 1 at a level sufficient for Candidacy. The following CFRs require further work, as described in the following:

- **CFR 1.2** Articulate concrete measures of student achievement that are better aligned to course material and program and institutional outcomes and more intentionally communicated to students and to the public.
- **CFR 1.3** Include academic freedom policies in the catalog and other appropriate publications.
- **CFR 1.5** Continue consideration and clarification of relationships with the Buddhist Church of America and the Graduate Theological Union (GTU).
- **CFR 1.7** Increase sophistication in business practices, including audits and review of institutional performance.

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

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

- **CFR 2.1** - Define outcomes for degrees with clear standards of performance for students. Examine balance among faculty teaching load, administrative responsibilities, and staff reporting lines
- **CFR 2.2** Define levels of achievement for degree attainment and develop processes to define and ensure the meaning, quality, and integrity of degrees.
- **CFRs 2.3 and 2.4** In curricula, program documents, assessment policies and procedures, and advising and communications with students, better reflect defined student performance upon completion of degrees as well as achievement of student learning outcomes and expectations for student learning at all levels.
- **CFR 2.6** Develop rubrics or other tools for assessing and providing feedback on stated levels of student work/achievement.
- **CFR 2.7** Define the program review process and complete at least one full program review before the next visit, including evidence of “closing the loop” (curricular revisions, budget requests, and other data driven decision-making).
- **CFR 2.10** Collect, aggregate, and analyze data related to student need, achievement, satisfaction, and timely progress towards degrees.
- **CFR 2.13** Consider how to address student needs for support with financial aid services and advising.

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

The Commission finds that IBS has demonstrated evidence of compliance with Standard 3 at a level sufficient for Candidacy. The following CFRs require further work, as described in the following:

- **CFR 3.4** Stabilize the financial situation to minimize or eliminate the need to draw down reserves. The ability to realistically project enrollment revenues is essential, and the institution is strongly encouraged to investigate sources of revenue beyond the potentially uncertain avenue of fundraising.

- **CFRs 3.6 and 3.7** Clarify organizational structures, lines of report, accountability, and areas of responsibility to ensure continued integrity and appropriate independent leadership structures.
- **CFR 3.8** Clarify the responsibilities of and lines of report, input, and accountability for the president, provost, CFO, and faculty administrators. Consider possible conflicts that could result from overlap of responsibilities.
- **CFR 3.9** Clarify the role and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees in a Board manual or other document to better equip the board to understand and execute its leadership role free from the encumbrance of the day-to-day operations of the institution.
- **CFR 3.10** Further consider and define the role of those who share teaching and administrative roles and distinguish processes to evaluate each of those roles.

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

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

- **CFR 4.1** Continue to identify and develop tools to gather, aggregate, and analyze appropriate data that will feed the implemented program review process and generate actionable next steps.
- **CFR 4.2** Continue to develop institutional research capacity related to data mining for planning and assessment purposes.
- **CFRs 4.3 and 4.4** Continue work to ground continuous improvement steps and decisions in a culture of evidence with systematic assessment of teaching and learning and clearly defined measures of student success.
- **CFR 4.6** Continue work on developing a culture of strategic planning grounded in a realistic appraisal of IBS' financial situation, to both outline a vision for the future and outline concrete actions steps (such as enrollment goals tracking, growth and projections, budgeting and financial planning) sufficient to take IBS forward toward accreditation.
- **CFR 4.7** Continue to monitor and resolve evolving issues with GTU and attend to the broader issues related to faith-based higher education.

In taking this action, the Commission confirms that the Institute for Buddhist Studies has met all of the WSCUC Standards a level sufficient to grant Candidacy. The Commission has scheduled the Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 for fall 2019.

The Institute for Buddhist Studies must use the following statement if it wishes to describe its Candidacy status publicly:

*The Institute of Buddhist Studies has been recognized as a Candidate for Accreditation by WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), 985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100, 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. 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.
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 IBS'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 the Institute of Buddhist Studies 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/do

Cc: William Ladusaw, Commission Chair  
Scott Mitchell, ALO  
Gordon Endo, Board Chair  
Members of the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 team  
Richard Osborn, Vice President