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March 7, 2014

Mr. Gary Brahm
Chancellor
Brandman University
16355 Laguna Canyon Road
Irvine, CA 92618

Dear Chancellor Brahm:

At its meeting February 19-21, 2014, the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) team that conducted the visit to Brandman University (Brandman) September 30 – October 2, 2013. The Commission also had access to the Educational Effectiveness Review report prepared by Brandman prior to the visit, the institution's December 5, 2013, response to the visiting team report, and the documents relating to the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) visit conducted March 21–23, 2012. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you, Charles A. Bullock, Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs and Chief Academic Officer and Provost, and Laurie Dodge, Associate Vice Chancellor of Institutional Assessment and Planning and Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO). Your comments were helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations.

Brandman's institutional proposal outlined two themes for this comprehensive review: attaining student success and building a learning community through communication. The two themes were relevant and important "to the newly structured institution with its unique program mix, delivery model, distributed campus system, and adult-learner student population." The visiting team concluded that the report was well prepared and organized, clearly written, and easily readable.

The Commission's action letter of July 3, 2012, highlighted four major issues for special attention during the interval between the CPR and EER visits: 1) faculty workload and engagement; 2) consolidating growth; 3) developing student services; and 4) preparing for the EER. The team concluded that all four areas were addressed in sufficient detail. Brandman used a clear set of strategic plans to address the recommendations and made notable progress since the CPR.

Brandman University is to be commended for nurturing a culture of evidence-based decision-making, integrating its Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) with upper-division programs, and developing signature assignments and rubrics.

Creating and implementing a culture of evidence-based decision-making. As highlighted in the team report, Brandman is to be commended “for its commitment to educational quality through the systematic collection of educational effectiveness data and for creating a culture of evidence-based decision-making. The use of data for decision-making is evident in the development of the curriculum and in the support of student success. The program assessment report and program review process utilizes multiple methods of data collection resulting in meaningful reflection about student learning.”

Integration of institutional learning outcomes. The team also commended Brandman for the integration of the five Institutional Learning Outcomes into all upper-division programs, using standardized ILO rubrics across all programs. The visiting team commended Brandman for its design and successful initial implementation of a formal assessment process for the General Education Degree Qualifications across the university.

Signature assignments and rubrics. The visiting team commended Brandman for the development of signature assignments with rubrics that measure student learning and for the level of faculty involvement in the development and continued improvement of these assessments.

The Commission endorses the commendations and recommendations of the EER team and wishes to emphasize the following areas for further attention and development:

Engagement of and support for adjunct faculty. The challenge for adjunct faculty is having the capacity to engage with the institution and its students while attending to other commitments outside the institution. The Commission expects Brandman to build the capacity to support its adjunct faculty in this changing educational environment. As the team reported, “given the significance of their role with educational effectiveness, adjunct faculty should be supported in their responsibility to engage in reflection and analysis at multiple levels in the institution.” Brandman’s response to the team report indicated that such engagement is “evidenced by their participation in course review, program assessment, and program review.” While the Commission commends Brandman for this engagement, Brandman University should continue to develop an academic model that strives for stability among its adjunct faculty and integrates them into decision-making about program and institutional effectiveness. (CFRs 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.8)

Pace of growth. The volatile economic environment and increasing demands on higher education require higher education institutions to adapt and change. While the team commended Brandman’s “innovativeness and responsiveness to the needs of adult learners,” it also cautioned the institution about the liabilities of rapid growth with specific reference to the institution’s “ability to measure effectiveness and quality.” Brandman University should monitor the growth of its newest degree program, the

Doctor of Education degree, as the first cohort of students completes the program. (CFRs 2.2b, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4)

Benchmarks for student learning outcomes. A key component of the assessment of student learning outcomes is determining whether the students' accomplishments are "good enough." Identifying benchmarks that represent educational effectiveness can assist in making these judgments. Brandman uses the Lumina Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) to help establish the university's Institutional Learning Outcomes. Brandman University should consider benchmarking its student learning outcomes data with other institutions implementing and publishing DQP results.

As Brandman addresses the issues cited above, it should be mindful of the expectations that it will need to meet at the time of its Mid-Cycle Review (see below), Interim Report, and next comprehensive review, which will take place under the Standards of Accreditation and, where relevant, institutional review process in the *2013 Handbook of Accreditation*. These expectations build on past practice and will include, for example, student success, quality improvement processes such as assessment and program review, planning, and financial sustainability. The institutional review process delineated in the 2013 Handbook also calls for institutions to address specific foci: the meaning, quality, and integrity of degrees; student performance in core competencies close to the time of graduation; institutional planning with respect to graduation and retention; and institutional anticipation of the changes in the context of higher education. Brandman will be well served to familiarize itself with the 2013 Handbook at an early stage of preparation for the next reviews and reports.

In light of the findings from the Educational Effectiveness Review visit to Brandman University, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness Review team report and reaffirm the accreditation of Brandman University for a period of eight years.
2. Schedule the next comprehensive review with the Offsite Review (OSR) in spring 2021, the Accreditation Visit (AV) in fall 2021, and the Commission action currently planned for February 2022.
3. Schedule a Mid-Cycle Review for spring 2018:
http://www.wascsenior.org/resources/mid-cycle_review.
4. Request an Interim Report due November 1, 2018 on the following issues cited in the EER team report: 1) engagement of and support for adjunct faculty, and 2) pace of growth. Progress should be demonstrated, as defined above.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that Brandman University has satisfactorily addressed the two Core Commitments to Institutional

Capacity and Educational Effectiveness and has successfully completed each aspect of the review conducted under the 2008 Standards of Accreditation. 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 the Brandman University 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 Brandman University website 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 will also be posted on the WSCUC website. If Brandman University wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WSCUC will post a link to that response.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that Brandman 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 our process. Please feel free to 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, WSCUC Chair
Laurie Dodge, ALO
David Janes, Board Chair
Members of the EER team
Maureen A. Maloney, WSCUC Staff Liaison