

March 4, 2019

Ms. Tonian Hoberg  
President  
Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising  
919 South Grand Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90015-1421

Dear President Hoberg:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising (FIDM) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting February 22, 2019. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Accreditation Visit to Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising October 15-18, 2018. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by FIDM prior to the Offsite Review (OSR), the supplemental materials requested by the team after the OSR, and the institution's January 14, 2019 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Susan Aronson, Executive Director of Admissions, Tess Stolzer, Vice President and Treasurer, and Lisa Schoening, Dean and ALO. 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 Accreditation Visit team report
2. Reaffirm accreditation for a period of six years
3. Issue a Formal Notice of Concern
4. Schedule the next reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in spring 2024 and the Accreditation Visit in fall 2024
5. Schedule the Mid-Cycle Review to begin May 1, 2021
6. Schedule a Special Visit in spring 2021 to examine progress made on Recommendations 1 through 5
7. Schedule a Progress Report to be submitted by March 1, 2020 to provide and update on Recommendations 1 through 5

The Commission commends FIDM in particular for the following:

1. The faculty and staff conveyed a true commitment to student education and the mission of the institution. FIDM's dedication to its students was evident throughout the reaffirmation process.
2. FIDM's mission and strategic initiatives are clearly defined and supported by the institution. FIDM is to be applauded for its attention to industry needs in tailoring programs for its students. To this end FIDM has a clear focus: providing career-

relevant education and actively involving industry in shaping the curriculum, building partnerships, and evaluating student projects.

3. The faculty is to be commended on developing the Faculty Council and preparing a comprehensive self-study for the visit.
4. FIDM has used a thoughtful and collaborative process to develop the current strategic plan.
5. FIDM has fostered an impressive culture of assessment. They have systemically aligned assignment rubrics, student learning outcomes, program learning outcomes, and institutional learning outcomes with one another and with their mission. The program learning outcomes are evaluated annually using data from faculty and external adjudicators, and outcomes are revised to account for changes in technologies or industry practices, or to better reflect skills/skill levels needed by their graduates.
6. FIDM's facilities, unique learning environment, and curriculum prepare students for careers in the industries represented.

The Commission requires the institution to respond to the following issues by the time of the Special Visit scheduled for spring 2021:

1. WSCUC Standards call for “an independent governing board ... that exercises appropriate oversight over institutional integrity, policies, and ongoing operations.” The governing body is to be comprised of members with the diverse qualifications required to govern an institution of higher learning. Since the last accreditation review, FIDM has developed a set of bylaws for the Governing Board. As provided in the bylaws, the responsibilities of the Board include review of academic programs, provision of legal counsel, succession planning, and review and oversight of operating budgets to ensure fiscal sustainability. In the Commission's view, the Board does not appear to be in full compliance with WSCUC Standards. The Board should be expanded to include members with diverse qualifications, specifically with higher education, legal, and financial expertise, who can provide leadership and commitment to help the Board fulfill its responsibilities regarding independent oversight (CFR 3.9).
2. FIDM has experienced a multi-year decline in enrollment that has been accompanied by reductions in revenue and net income. The Commission is extremely concerned about the sustainability of the institution. FIDM is advised to create a concrete turn-around plan based on realistic actions that can be immediately implemented by the Governing Board and Board of Administration (CFR 3.4).
3. The institution should increase transparency and communication to all its constituents. FIDM is advised to adopt best practices in financial and enrollment reporting, administrative decision making, data reporting, and changes to institutional policies and procedures (CFR 1.7).
4. FIDM depends on the expertise and commitment of faculty. FIDM needs to expand the role of the faculty in institutional governance, academic oversight, and decision making (CFR 3.10).

5. The educational objectives are recognized throughout the college and are consistent with FIDM's mission. However, FIDM should generate, evaluate, and make public data about student achievement, job placement, and enrollment (CFR 1.2).

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that FIDM has addressed the three Core Commitments and has successfully completed the two-stage institutional review process conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. In keeping with WSCUC values, FIDM should strive for ongoing improvement with adherence to all Standards of Accreditation and their associated CFRs to foster a learning environment that continuously strives for educational excellence and operational effectiveness.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of FIDM's governing board. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the FIDM's website and 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. The team report and the Commission's action letter will also be posted on the WSCUC website. If the institution wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WSCUC will post a link to that response on the WSCUC website.

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



Jamiene S. Studley  
President

JSS/thh

Cc: Reed Dasenbrock, Commission Chair  
Lisa Schoening, ALO  
Byron Hayes, Board Chair  
Members of the Accreditation Visit team  
Tamela Hawley, Vice President