

June 30, 2017

Dr. George Neau  
Chancellor  
SUM Bible College and Theological Seminary  
735 105<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Oakland, CA 94603

Dear Chancellor Neu:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning SUM Bible College and Theological Seminary (SUM) 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 (SAV1) to SUM January 30 – February 2, 2017. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by SUM. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you, and your colleagues: Bruce Coats, Chief Academic Officer; Elsie Cook, Vice President for Cohort Development; Mike Savage, Vice President of Enrollment; and Bob Hornick, Chief Financial Officer. 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 spring 2019

### **Commendations**

The Commission commends SUM in particular for the following:

1. The faculty's commitment to SUM's students. The Commission notes that after the visiting team spoke to students studying in Oakland and in cohorts around the country, it was clear to them that the students feel supported by a caring, knowledgeable, and responsive faculty;
2. The unity of purpose in pursuing the process of regional accreditation;
3. The creation of a highly innovative delivery system, cohort model, and use of technology that allows the institution to provide high-quality educational programs and experiences across the United States and internationally;
4. The faculty and administration's creation of a foundation for student learning outcomes assessment upon which SUM can build;
5. The creation of a culture of communication and collaboration among and between administration, faculty, staff, and students dispersed across the United States and around the world.

The Commission identified the following issues for further development:

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

The Commission finds that SUM 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** Better alignment of program learning outcomes with the further content of the syllabi to ensure valid measurement of student learning outcomes. The Commission is also concerned with the team's finding that SUM does not post publicly available and easily accessible retention and graduation rates, and recommends that the institution add additional data and disclosures in the fact sheet or other easily accessed appropriate published locations to include enrollment, financial aid performance, student engagement, and updated alumni outcomes.
- **CFR 1.3** The faculty academic freedom policy is not comprehensive, nor does it clearly reflect SUM's expectations and culture. The current academic freedom policy seems to emphasize what instructors should avoid saying or teaching in the classroom, rather than outlining an appropriate academic freedom culture for an institution of Biblical higher education. In addition, SUM needs to develop academic freedom policies that apply to students and other members of the campus community.
- **CFR 1.4** The Commission recommends that SUM continue to explore its diversity practices and policies, taking into consideration all aspects of WSCUC's diversity policy: representation, community on campus, and co-curricular development of cultural acceptance. While recognizing the challenges of finding academically qualified candidates within its faith community, the Commission recommends continued and aggressive attempts to hire a more diverse faculty.

## Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objective through Core Functions

The Commission finds that SUM 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 2.2** Some cohort students receive their entire baccalaureate program in a language other than English. In such instances, programs must conform to the WSCUC *Instruction in Languages other than English Policy*.
- **CFR 2.2a** The formal statement of general education philosophy and purpose needs to reflect deeper engagement with the value, purpose, and institutional commitment to general education.
- **CFR 2.6** Assessment of student learning, especially at the program level, needs further development. For each set of program learning outcomes, the faculty should identify when each outcome will be assessed and on the basis of what kinds of evidence. The assessment of a program's learning outcomes should be completed in accordance with a plan and timetable so that a complete set of program learning outcome assessment reports are available for the commencement of program review.
- **CFR 2.7** A formal program review process needs to be developed, as described in WSCUC's *Resource Guide for "Good Practices" in Academic Program Review*. This process should include a consistent presentation of graduation and retention rates.

- **CFR 2.9** Performance evaluation of faculty should include the relationship between scholarship, teaching, student learning, and service.
- **CFR 2.10** The current mechanisms used to gather information about student needs, achievement, satisfaction, and campus climate should be formalized to bring consistency and standardization.
- **CFR 2.11** Each co-curricular program should undergo a program review similar to an academic program review.

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

The Commission finds that SUM 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 3.2** Evaluation of faculty must include a record of evaluation results and steps being taken if the results are negative.
- **CFR 3.3** SUM has undertaken several faculty and staff development activities and should continue to find potential areas for further development.
- **CFR 3.4** Long-term budget scenarios need to be developed, taking into consideration the creation and maintenance of programs, operations, staffing, and fundraising efforts. While noting that the institution has experienced solid enrollment growth, the Commission encourages caution in not basing budgets on overly optimistic projections.
- **CFR 3.7** With the planned expansion of the cohort model to additional cities in the United States and countries around the world, SUM should continue its efforts to reorganize its administrative structure to plan for such growth.
- **CFR 3.8** Given the size and complexity of SUM, a full-time Chief Financial Officer must be hired on an expedited basis to meet WSCUC expectations.
- **CFR 3.9** The Board needs to develop an evaluation process for the CEO. The Commission also recommends that SUM consider expanding the size of its Board.
- **CFR 3.10** SUM should consider developing more robust and formal faculty governance processes.

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

The Commission finds that SUM 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** A formalized evaluation process for data collection and analysis needs to be developed, including multiple mechanisms for assessing student performance using both direct and indirect measures.
- **CFR 4.2** The full-time institutional researcher to be hired will need to develop a formalized approach to institutional research beyond the current approach of compiling survey data.

- **CFR 4.4** SUM needs to develop standards of performance for the institution and ensure that they are achieved. Institutional effectiveness assessment results should be used to improve student learning and success.
- **CFR 4.6** Greater awareness of the institution's strategic plan is needed on the part of the Board of Directors and other campus groups. The strategic plan needs to be aligned with the institution's budget, address key priorities for the future, and undergo regular monitoring and revision.

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

SUM Bible College and Theological Seminary must use the following statement if it wishes to describe its Candidacy status publicly:

*SUM Bible College and Theological Seminary 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 SUM'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 SUM 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  
Bruce Coats, ALO  
Richard Picone, Board Chair  
Members of the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 team  
Maureen Maloney, Vice President  
Richard Osborn, Vice President