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Mary Ellen Petrisko

March 6, 2015

Dr. Stephen Morgan
President
University of the West
1409 Walnut Grove Avenue
Rosemead, CA 91770

Dear Dr. Morgan:

At its meeting February 18-20, 2015, the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) team that conducted the visit to University of the West (UWest) October 29-29, 2014. The Commission also had access to the Educational Effectiveness Review report prepared by University of the West prior to the visit and the documents relating to the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) visit conducted in fall 2010 and the Special Visit (SV) conducted in fall 2012. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you and your colleagues Dean and ALO Vanessa Karam Institutional Effectiveness & Planning Officer Monica Sanford, and Institutional Research & Assessment Officer Michael Oertel. Your comments were helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations.

University of the West's institutional approach outlined four themes for this comprehensive review:

1. Mission & Multiculturalism
2. Academic Effectiveness
3. Co-curricular Integration
4. Planning for Growth

The institution engaged each of the thematic topics in a comprehensive, articulate, and consistent manner, with ample evidence provided in support of the narrative. Cross-referencing the 2008 and 2013 CFRs was especially helpful. The analysis of the themes was done effectively based on the supporting evidence; however, two of the themes lacked a summary section about what actions steps would be taken as a result of the analysis.

The Commission's CPR action letter of March 7, 2011 and the later SV action letter of March 11, 2013 highlighted seven major issues for special attention during the interval between the CPR and EER visits:

Mission and Communication Direction of the University

During the year preceding the EER visit, the institution engaged in an inclusive and in-depth strategic planning process. As part of that effort, there was broad outreach to stakeholders, both to solicit input and to communicate preliminary conclusions. There has been a significantly positive beginning to the communication of the direction of the institution, based on its refined mission.

Board of Trustees

The institution has enlarged its membership on the Board of Trustees, with knowledgeable and engaged members. It has set a course for greater diversity, autonomy, and local representation. Additionally, it has engaged in professional development representative of a highly-functioning board, which contributed to the hiring of a seasoned president well-versed in the practices of American postsecondary education.

Leadership

Prior institutional Bylaws lacked a formal process for the evaluation of the president. That absence has been remedied and a functioning process is now in place.

Resources

The institution has developed a 5-Year Strategic and Pro-Forma Budget Report, carrying through the year 2018. It contains goals and resources necessary to achieve them. The plan is specific and comprehensive.

Academics

UWest has taken steps to ensure that program review is conducted on a periodic, scheduled basis in the context of strategic planning. The completion of a full cycle of program review will be realized by the end of the spring 2015 term.

Faculty

The foundation for a culture of evidence undergirding the assessment process has been put in place, primarily using the software TaskStream to assist faculty in aligning course learning outcomes with institutional goals. The processes include both full- and part-time faculty. However, issues concerning faculty research have not yet been addressed, and the institution may need to calibrate its plans for growth with a corresponding increase in the number of full-time faculty.

Assessment

UWest's institutional research function has continued to mature, providing necessary data for informed decision-making. The institution has also demonstrated the ability to make changes in programs based on these data, evidence of its commitment to "closing the loop." Further discussion of academics and assessment is contained later in this letter.

University of the West is to be commended for:

Growth in Assessment Practices

As noted in the report, "It was evident to the team that the institution is doing assessment for improvement of student learning." The institution has accomplished this with the support of the faculty, thereby creating the foundation for a culture of assessment.

Enhanced Leadership

The Board of Trustees has grown in both numbers and in members' type of professional experience, achieving greater diversity with members who are committed to the values of and highly informed about the issues facing the institution. The sponsoring Order has given the Board the necessary independence to fulfill its governing role. The hiring of a president with a deep understanding of American higher education reflects a commitment to the practices

expected of a regionally accredited institution. Finally, the creation and implementation of a thorough presidential evaluation process is direct evidence that this commitment is carried out in action.

"Closing the loop"

University of the West has taken multiple actions to improve curriculum and pedagogy. The improvements have been based on careful analysis of institution-generated data. The institution has continuously developed core practices of analysis and action which lead to improved student learning.

Mission Clarification

As noted in the report, "team members agreed that the essay represents a timely, appropriate, and honest attempt to understand vital issues confronting the institution, to analyze those issues rationally and in an inclusive manner, and to begin to address the findings." University of the West has taken a transparent and comprehensive approach to clarifying and communicating institutional purpose. This practice will serve UWest well as it grows its student body in the context of data-driven decision-making.

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

Examine and streamline program review, external review, and assessment practices.

The multiple current activities of review and assessment would benefit from consolidation, including a cycle of program reviews that occur less frequently. "The team...suggests that the university consider a staggered system of in-depth program reviews on a recurring cycle." In addition, there is a need to take the next step beyond integrated design to generate useable assessment evidence. "Reviewers noted that curriculum and co-curriculum as designed do not by themselves constitute evidence of student learning, but need to be supported by concrete assessment results." (CFRs 2.7, 2.10, 4.1 and 4.4)

Accelerate the analysis and use of student success data. The foundation for a greater understanding of student persistence is in place. The institution should disaggregate student success data to inform its decision-making about which practices have the most benefit. "The team recommends that UWest develop goals and targets by looking at other institutions, and by looking at good practices from among other institutions." (CFRs 1.2 and 2.10)

Maintain the strategic planning process momentum and examine resource allocation.

University of the West has initiated an inclusive and clarifying process by which to chart its future. This work should be finalized and an action plan to accomplish the goals of the final strategic plan created to assure its realization. UWest has put itself in an enviable financial position and generated operating surpluses. "The team recommends that, for the next five years, the university budget less conservatively and invest in the academic infrastructure that will serve the planned enrollment growth and promote educational effectiveness." (CFRs 3.4 and 4.5 - 4.7)

Reconstruct the class scheduling practice. Class scheduling is both an issue of facility use and of pedagogy. Significant research literature describes the most productive methods for

scheduling classes. Review and application of this research "can promote student learning and success." (CFRs 2.4 and 2.5)

Build the nascent enrollment management function. With its plan for growth, the institution will need a robust enrollment management office. Following the recommendations of an outside consultant, a Dean of Enrollment Management has been hired. As part of the development of this function, UWest has begun to evaluate the success of co-curricular activities. As noted in the team report, "the university should....analyze the effectiveness of each particular program" in addition to following the other recommendations of the outside consultant. (CFRs 3.1, 3.7, 4.6 and 4.7)

Enhance the graduate culture and consider increasing the number of full-time faculty. Both expanded research opportunities and increased numbers of full-time faculty may be required to achieve enrollment goals. "The Visiting Team strongly encourages UWest to continue its trajectory toward hiring a full-time faculty sufficient to ensure the academic integrity of UWest....and a meaningful graduate culture as appropriate to its mission and program emphases." (CFRs 2.2b, 2.10, and 3.1)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness Review team report and reaffirm the accreditation of University of the West for a period of seven years.
2. Schedule the next comprehensive review with the Offsite Review in spring 2021 and the Accreditation Visit scheduled in fall 2021.
3. Request a Special Visit in spring 2017 on the following issues, and also incorporating the recommendations for development contained previously in this letter:
 - a. A discussion of the completed strategic plan, including the process by which it receives final approval, the development of an accompanying tactical (or operational) plan to achieve its goals, and the results of the first period of its implementation
 - b. A discussion of analysis done on disaggregated student success data, to include the conclusions reached from that analysis and the actions taken based on those conclusions
 - c. A discussion of enhancements taken to further the development of a graduate culture, in light of the institution's programmatic direction towards expanded graduate offerings (e.g., the ThD proposal).
4. Schedule a Mid-Cycle Review in spring 2019.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that University of the West has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments to Student Learning and Success; Quality and Improvement; and Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Accountability. University of the West has successfully completed the multi-stage review conducted under the 2008 Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review, the institution is encouraged to maintain its compliance with WSCUC standards and uphold its commitment to continuous quality improvement.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of University of the West'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 the University of the West 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 this letter. 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.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that University of the West 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 participation in 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/cno

Cc: William Ladusaw, Commission Chair
Vanessa Karman, ALO
Venerable Hsin Ting Shih, Board Chair
Members of the EER team
Christopher Oberg, Vice President