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July 7, 2014

Dr. Steven Wheelwright
President
Brigham Young University-Hawaii
55-220 Kulani Street
Laie, Oahu, HI 96762

Dear Dr. Wheelwright:

At its meeting June 18–20, 2014, the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) considered the report of the review team that conducted the Special Visit (SV) to Brigham Young University-Hawaii (BYUH) March 5-7, 2014. The Commission also had access to the institutional report prepared by BYUH prior to the Special Visit, and to the institution's May 22, 2014 response to the visiting team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you and your colleagues Max Checketts, Vice President of Academics, and Rose Ram, ALO. Your comments were helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations.

The Special Visit was scheduled to address Commission concerns contained in the Action Letter dated July 10, 2012. Specifically, BYUH was asked to address:

1. Ensuring the efficacy of the Bachelor of University Studies (BUS) degree
2. Impact of resetting financial priorities

An Interim Report was considered by a review panel in July 2013; the Interim Report Committee letter further requested the institution to "address in both great specificity and governing logic, the rationale, pathways to entry, and unique outcomes of the BUS degree within the context of the institution as a whole, and with reference to the meaning, quality, and integrity of the degree component of the 2013 Handbook."

The institutional report directly addressed the issues surrounding the BUS degree but not the impact of resetting financial priorities. Supplemental materials were requested by the team in advance of the visit, and evidence for review was received before the members arrived on campus.

Six areas related to the efficacy of the BUS degree were identified in the July 2012 Action Letter. The institution responded swiftly to five of these areas: (1) readily available listing of degree requirements; (2) supervision of the degree by a lead faculty member and oversight by the institution's academic deans; (3) creation of program learning outcomes; (4) defined admissions path, rather than placement in the program by an advisor; and (5) completion of a program review. The issue of preparing students for meaningful employment or future study was not addressed.

The visiting team found that “pathways to entry [to the BUS degree] are now more rigorous and under faculty oversight,” with a clear delineation of the requirement for entry into the program. It was noted that since these changes, “enrollment in the major has declined by 70% from a high of 82 in 2010 to 25 in fall 2013.” The program review team acknowledged this limit in scope for the program, remarking that “the BUS program does have a clear role to play within the institution, but in a significantly more limited way than has recently been the case.”

That review also contained numerous recommendations regarding the BUS degree. These included limiting matriculation to non-traditional students who previously attended BYU-H but may not now be able to finish because their previously declared major is no longer offered, a reconsideration of the course offerings to instill coherency into what appears to be a cluster rather than a sequence, and a recalibration of student learning outcomes to make them less vague and uneven. The institution has proposed a number of activities to address these concerns and undertaken efforts on some of them. However, there remain important issues to address. These include an analysis of the required number of upper-division credits for completion of the BUS degree.

In addition, the basic university process for initiating new degrees – including standards, rubrics, and protocols – requires review in order to mitigate confusion about program offerings.

With respect to the resetting of financial priorities, the team clarified for the institution that this line of inquiry did not embrace issues of financial sustainability. The team recognized and confirmed the healthy fiscal profile of the institution. Rather, the team clarified that the intent of the Action Letter on this point was to gain a better understanding of the impact of the change in practice which resulted in the nine semester-in-residence policy, both upon students and upon faculty. The policy calls for students to complete their degrees in nine semesters, with the opportunity to petition for additional time if necessary. The new practice has achieved the stated goal of reducing Church support to 70% of the institution’s budget but has also called upon faculty to increase teaching load and participate in a year-round teaching calendar. Students have likewise felt the impact, especially students from the Pacific Basin. This is due to the fact that housing and scholarships are allocated primarily to students who are continuously enrolled; that many international students need to take classes in English as an International Language, which are counted as part of the nine semesters-in-residence policy; and that students need to work during their matriculation. While there is an opportunity for students to petition to increase the number of semesters available to complete their work, it appears that this has created *ad hoc* pathways to graduate that are becoming *de facto* policies. Data provided to the team indicate that well over 200 appeals were submitted in 2012 and 2013, and approximately 90% were approved.

Brigham Young University-Hawaii is to be commended for:

Careful Stewardship of Institutional Resources. The leadership provided by the President and the academic Vice President are consistent with, and have accomplished, the stated goals.

Dedication to the Program Review Process. The program review for the BUS degree provides evidence and recommendations which can be used to further the maturation and refinement of learning outcomes.

Flexibility in Managing Established Policy. The institution has modified the nsemesters-in-residence policy to respond to the various needs of a complex and diverse student population.

A Campus Culture of Open Debate. There was ample evidence that constituents have the opportunity to express and discuss their perspectives about key institutional initiatives.

The Commission also endorses the following recommendations of the team:

Develop and Refine Policies Relating to the Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees. Specifically, the institution should consider establishing campus-wide minimal standards for upper-division credit hours. Those standards should meet degree requirements found within BYU sister institutions. Attention should likewise be given to a comprehensive review of the course numbering system. (CFR 2.2)

Apply Policy to the BUS Degree. Parallel to the first recommendation, the institution should ensure that the BUS degree requirements conform to a newly developed/further refined policy on upper-division coursework. As part of this application of policy, Brigham Young University-Hawaii should align the BUS degree with the findings of the BUS Program Review document, or discontinue the degree. (CFRs 2.1, 2.2., and 2.2a)

Clarify the Approval Process for New Degrees. This should include standards, rubrics, and protocols to ensure that faculty and students are fully aware of the accepted procedures for the establishment of new degree programs. (CFRs 4.4 and 4.7)

Enhance the Coordination of Academic and Financial Planning. Drawing on its continuing experience with the nine semesters-in-residence policy, the institution should review ways to improve how programs are evaluated before they are implemented. As part of that review, consideration should be given to expanding and formalizing the roles of key faculty and student stakeholders, with an eye to increasing attention to and valuing these constituent voices.

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Special Visit team report and continue accreditation
2. Continue with the scheduled Offsite Review set for spring 2016 and the Accreditation Visit set for spring 2017
3. Maintain the suspension of general degree-granting approval until the institution can demonstrate to WSCUC staff that appropriate measures are in place for the initiation of new degrees. This must include that upper division requirements meet or exceed standards at other BYU campuses, that they be applied to the BUS degree, and that the degree approval process for new programs matures to conform transparently to WSCUC standards and practices.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of Brigham Young University-Hawaii'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 Brigham Young University-Hawaii's web

site 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 these documents. The team report and the action letter also will be posted on the WSCUC website.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that Brigham Young University-Hawaii 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 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: Harold Hewitt, Jr., Commission Chair
Rose Ram, ALO
Thomas L Monson, Board Chair
Christopher Oberg, WSCUC Staff Liaison