



March 11, 2013

CHAIR
Harold Hewitt
Chapman University

VICE CHAIR
William Ladusaw
University of California, Santa Cruz

Richard Bray
Schools Commission Representative

Ronald Carter
Loma Linda University

Christopher T. Cross
Public Member

Jackie Donath
California State University, Sacramento

John Etchemendy
Stanford University

Dianne Harrison
California State University, Northridge

Michael Jackson
University of Southern California

Roberts Jones
Public Member

Barbara Karlin
Golden Gate University

Margaret Kasimatis
Loyola Marymount University

Devorah Lieberman
University of La Verne

Julia Lopez
Public Member

Thomas McFadden
*Community and Junior Colleges
Representative*

Leroy Morishita
California State University, East Bay

Stephen Privett, S.J.
University of San Francisco

Sharon Salinger
University of California, Irvine

Sheldon Schuster
Keck Graduate Institute

Carmen Sigler
San Jose State University

Ramon Torrecilha
*California State University,
Dominguez Hills*

Leah Williams
Public Member

Paul Zingg
California State University, Chico

PRESIDENT
Ralph A. Wolff

Andrew Benton
President
Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263

Dear President Benton:

At its meeting February 20-22, 2013, the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) team that conducted the visit to Pepperdine University September 26-28, 2012. The Commission also had access to the Educational Effectiveness Review report prepared by Pepperdine prior to the visit, the institution's December 3, 2012 response to the visiting team report, and the documents relating to the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) visit conducted in September 2010. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you and with Darryl Tippens, Provost, and Lisa Bortman, Assistant Provost and Accreditation Liaison Officer. Your comments were helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations.

Pepperdine University's EER institutional report focused on three themes: 1) student learning and assessment; 2) faculty engagement; and 3) evidence-based decision-making. Overall the team was impressed by the quality, candor and rigor of the report, noting "It was readily apparent that a great deal of time and energy had been invested in conducting research, writing essays, and compiling supporting documentation." The team also concluded that Pepperdine had "made substantial progress toward achieving the EER outcomes listed in (its) institutional proposal."

The Commission's letter of March 3, 2011, highlighted several areas for special attention during the interval between the CPR and EER visits: strengthening student learning outcomes, assessment and program review; clarifying shared governance and faculty roles; and increasing institutional capacity to gather, analyze and use information for decision-making. According to the team, Pepperdine has made significant progress in each of these areas.

During its time on campus, the team found much to commend:

Assessment and program review. Pepperdine has established key committees and processes in the areas of assessment and program review that provide, according to the team, "a good model of faculty leadership working collaboratively with administration to support institutional learning."

Pepperdine has also created an administrative office considered by the team to be “an extraordinary resource,” that collects and analyzes data to help inform decision-making. The team acknowledged Pepperdine’s “remarkable progress” in program review, measurements of quality, inter-institutional comparisons, rubrics, and increased faculty involvement in these areas. Based on the evidence, the team confirmed Pepperdine’s self-evaluation that the university has “made significant strides toward fully integrating an outcomes-based approach to assess student learning.”

Strategic planning. Pepperdine has made “excellent progress” in developing a strategic plan (*Pepperdine 2020: Boundless Horizons*) that was the result of widespread institutional involvement. The plan’s main goals have been embraced by stakeholders and speak to the values of the institution: student learning, scholarship, faith, community, and diversity. Though implementation details had not yet been finalized at the time of the visit, the plan was already in use to guide decision-making.

Faculty, staff, and administrator commitment. The team was impressed by the personal attention students receive, the small classes taught by caring faculty, the availability of faculty outside of class, and the support provided by student service units. The team also commended the leadership of Pepperdine for supporting institutional change. The dedication and enthusiasm of those who work at the university (“proud to be part of the Wave”) were readily apparent to the team during the visit.

Engagement with WASC. In its written materials submitted to WASC over the course of two visits, the university showed unfailing “candor, honesty, seriousness of purpose,” and responsiveness to previous recommendations. The team and the Commission commend Pepperdine for its high level of commitment to the reaccreditation process.

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

Continuing to strengthen student learning and assessment. The Commission is pleased to learn that Pepperdine has added students to its assessment and program review committees. The Commission expects the university to continue its assessment efforts by such means as: using more and varied forms of direct evidence of student learning; defining and refining student learning outcomes; and working to better align learning activities and rubrics with those outcomes. To this end, Pepperdine will want to demonstrate that the institution is producing individuals who meet the university’s expectations of a Pepperdine graduate. (CFRs 2.3, 2.6, 2.7, 4.4, 4.6)

Implementing the strategic plan. The Commission understands that the implementation phase of the Strategic Plan is underway. The Commission expects Pepperdine to continue its progress in establishing metrics, timelines and assignments of responsibilities and to show how the strategic plans at the level of the schools and colleges will align with the university’s plan. As the team noted, currently the plan “provides little about the future of higher education, the new opportunities and challenges that may lie ahead, and the potential need for universities to adapt rapidly to a changing marketplace.” The Commission expects Pepperdine to incorporate into its strategic planning efforts and specific action steps ways in which the university will respond to the new ecology of learning (e.g., technology) and the changing higher education landscape. (CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)

Continuing to enhance diversity and inclusion. Diversity refers to differences that exist among people, for example, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality, disability, age, religion and spirituality, language, family responsibilities, socioeconomic status, worldview, political persuasions, academic preparation, regional and national identity, among others. Inclusion refers to actions an institution can take to make each member of the campus community feel welcome and part of the university. The desire to increase diversity (faculty, staff and students) and the importance of campus climate has appeared in Pepperdine’s CPR and EER self-studies. Pepperdine has signaled the priority of diversity by making it one of the five goals of the strategic plan: “increase institutional diversity consistent with our mission.” The team noted that “more remains to be done” in this area. Pepperdine can strengthen its efforts by ensuring that attention to diversity and inclusion is threaded through academic programs, co-curricular experiences, faculty/staff hiring, communications and other facets of the life of the university. The University will need to clarify the meaning of its diversity strategic goal, widely communicate that understanding to campus stakeholders, and set action items and timelines for achieving further improvements in diversity and inclusion. (CFRs 1.5, 4.1, 4.3)

Continuing to strengthen faculty engagement and shared governance. The university has taken numerous steps to understand and improve faculty engagement and shared governance, but in the team’s words, “Structures for shared governance and faculty’s sense of influence in decision-making still need considerable development.” The team urged Pepperdine “to move with haste,” and the Commission concurs, to develop a vision and concrete plan for shared governance, appropriate to the university’s culture. The Commission is pleased to learn about recent efforts to give faculty a voice in committee appointments and to craft a new governance statement. The university will need to continue its efforts to create open and collaborative working environments, and to improve the sense of trust between faculty and administrators. (CFRs 3.8, 3.11, 4.1, 4.6, 4.7)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness Review report.
2. Reaffirm the accreditation of Pepperdine University.
3. Schedule the next comprehensive review with the Off-Site Review in Fall 2020 and the accreditation visit tentatively scheduled for Fall 2021.
4. Request an Interim Report on November 1, 2015 showing progress on the following issues:
 - a. Strengthening student learning and assessment (using more and varied forms of direct evidence of student learning; defining and refining student learning outcomes; and working to better align learning activities and rubrics with those outcomes)
 - b. Implementing the strategic plan (including aligning school level plans with the university plan, and incorporating strategies for responding to the changing higher education landscape);
 - c. Enhancing diversity and inclusion (clarifying the meaning of the diversity strategic goal and putting in place action items and timelines for further improvements);
 - d. Strengthening faculty engagement and shared governance (developing a vision and plan for shared governance; creating open and collaborative working environments; improving levels of trust between faculty and administrators).

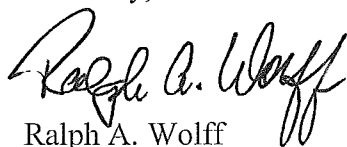
In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that Pepperdine University has satisfactorily addressed the two Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness, and has successfully completed the three-stage review conducted under the Standards of Accreditation.

The Commission especially praises Pepperdine for establishing a plan for the next six to ten years that describes what the university needs to do to meet the revised Standards of Accreditation and the expectations of the *2013 Handbook*. The expectations in the *2013 Handbook* build on past practice and include, for example, student success, quality improvement processes such as assessment and program review, planning, and financial sustainability. The *2013 Handbook* also incorporates new foci: the meaning, quality, and integrity of degrees; student performance in core competencies at the time of graduation; and institutional planning for the “new ecology” of learning. The Commission is pleased to learn that Pepperdine has taken steps to prepare itself now for its next comprehensive review.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of Pepperdine University’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 Pepperdine website and widely disseminated throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement. The team report and the action letter will also be posted on the WASC website. If the institution wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WASC will post a link to that response.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that the university undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WASC 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,



Ralph A. Wolff
President

RW/bgd

cc: Harold Hewitt, Commission Chair
Lisa Bortman, ALO
Edwin Biggers, Board Chair
Members of the EER team
Barbara Gross Davis, Vice President