WASC Senior College and University Commission

July 20, 2018

Dr. Randal R. Wisbey
President
La Sierra University
4500 Riverwalk Parkway
Provost Office, Administrative Building #225
Riverside, CA 92505-8247

Dear President Wisbey:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning La Sierra University by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting June 27-29, 2018. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Accreditation Visit to La Sierra University April 11-13, 2018. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by LSU prior to the Offsite Review (OSR), the supplemental materials requested by the team after the OSR, and the institution's June 12, 2018 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you, and your colleagues: Joy Fehr, Provost; and David Geriguis, CFO. 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 eight years
3. Schedule the next reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in fall 2025 and the Accreditation Visit in spring 2026
4. Schedule the Mid-Cycle Review to begin May 1, 2022
5. Schedule a Progress Report due November 1, 2019 to address the following:
    a. Demonstrate that La Sierra produces accurate data for its annual report to WSCUC and total enrollments, transfers in and out of La Sierra University and student demographic data
    b. Show revenue separate from endowment draw down
    c. Report accurate enrollment targets for the next three years
6. Schedule an Interim Report due November 1, 2021 to address all recommendations listed below concerning finance and institutional research

Commendations

The Commission commends La Sierra University in particular for the following:

1. A well-established and widely supported sense of mission and purpose.
2. Focused attention on student success.
3. Service learning, which is valued and integrated across the curriculum.

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4. Commitment to establishing a comprehensive and integrated planning process. Of particular note is the inclusive nature of membership on key committees.
5. Commitment to assessment and movement to a culture of evidence-based decision making.
6. Recognition of the importance of institutional research as the basis for establishing a strategic approach to analysis, assessment, and planning.
7. An inclusive and welcoming environment for diverse students of all faiths.
8. Successful management of a significant challenge to academic freedom resulting in a stronger and more cohesive institution.

Recommendations

The Commission requires the institution to respond to the following issues by the time of the interim report due November 1, 2021:

Governance:

1. Engage the board vigorously and appropriately in planning and ensuring financial sustainability. Time will be of the essence in implementing new plans for enrollment and program development. (CFR 3.4, 3.7, 3.9)
2. Continue the practice of encouraging committees and task forces to maintain broad membership, while also ensuring concerted efforts in creating actionable goals, setting timely milestones, and assessing progress in a well-documented and open fashion. (CFR 3.7, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6)
3. Make changes at the trustee level including:
   a. create a free-standing audit committee with independence from the Trustee Finance Committee,
   b. invest the power to make the initial recommendation for changes to the Board of Trustees' bylaws solely to the Board of Trustees, and
   c. delegate sole responsibility for the executive staff, including the Provost and CFO, to the President, according to usual practice in higher education. (CFR 3.6, 3.7, 3.9)

Finance:

4. Conduct formal financial modeling that ensures strategic enrollment goals are realistic and will produce positive net financial results. (CFR 3.4)
5. Consider changing its display on the Statement of Activities to reclassify total return in excess of the allocation of endowment under the spending policy from revenues to changes in net assets from non-operating activities. (CFR 3.4)

Program Review and Institutional Research:

6. Modify its schedule of academic program reviews so that the time lapse between reviews during this transition period is 10 years or less. (CFR 2.7, 4.1)

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7. Continue to build a robust institutional research department and follow accepted higher education standards in the compilation and reporting of enrollment, retention, and graduation data. (CFR 4.1, 4.2)
8. Align marketing and enrollment efforts and develop actionable metrics to maximize effectiveness in the critical area of recruitment. (CFR 3.7, 4.5, 4.6)

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that La Sierra University has addressed the three Core Commitments and has successfully completed the two-stage institutional review process conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review for reaffirmation, the institution is encouraged to continue its progress, particularly with respect to student learning and success.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of La Sierra 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 La Sierra University 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 La Sierra University 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,

Jamienne S. Studley
President

JSS/lw

Cc: Reed Dasenbrock, Commission Chair
Cindy Parkhurst, ALO
Ricardo Graham, Board Chair
Members of the Accreditation Visit team
Lori Williams, Vice President

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