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Ralph A. Wolff

July 10, 2012

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

Dear President Wheelwright:

At its meeting June 13-15, 2012, the Commission considered the report of the Special Visit team that conducted an on-site review of Brigham Young University - Hawaii (BYUH) March 29-30, 2012. The Commission also reviewed the Special Visit report submitted by the University prior to the visit and the institution's May 11, 2012 response to the visiting team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and Max Checketts, vice president for academics. Your observations were very helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations. The Commission especially appreciated your description of recent initiatives to address some of the matters identified by the team during the visit.

In acting to reaffirm the accreditation of BYUH in 2008, the Commission requested a Special Visit for spring 2012 in order to observe institutional progress in three critical areas:

1. **Financial priorities:** In view of reductions in church support for institutional operations, the Commission asked BYUH to ensure that cost-saving measures would not compromise educational effectiveness in terms of their impact on class size, faculty recruitment, faculty research, use of online instruction, and continued support for assessment activities.
2. **Continued work on assessment:** The Commission expected complete implementation of appropriate student learning outcomes, program review for all departments, assessment of general education competencies, and use of assessment data to improve learning.
3. **Faculty scholarship:** The Commission called for development of a definition of faculty standards for various forms of research, scholarship and creative activity, such as those identified by Boyer (discovery, integration, engagement, teaching), and for a report on the implications of those clarified standards for faculty retention, development, and promotion.

The Commission endorsed the findings, commendations, and recommendations of the Special Visit team. The evaluation team found that there had been progress in

some areas, but new issues and concerns arose as a result of the visit, further discussed below. Regarding the topic of assessment, the team found that the robust assessment initiatives observed in the recent review cycle are being continued and are maturing. Systematic program review, governed by a faculty-driven process, has been applied to almost all academic programs and many aspects of the co-curriculum. Although the use of learning outcomes remains uneven in course syllabi, the team expressed confidence that a culture of evidence is being sustained.

The institution's efforts related to faculty scholarship – its definitions, expectations, and alignment with mission – have been clarified around a reaffirmed commitment to the primacy of teaching. Issues such as faculty release time for scholarly work, promotion and status processes, and compensation agreements are being addressed with generally positive outcomes, though heavy workloads remain troubling for some faculty – a matter that will be addressed below.

A new area arose during the course of the team visit that led to serious team concerns regarding the Bachelor of University Studies (BUS) program. The team found that this degree program had been initiated outside of normal institutional processes, and raised issues of institutional quality and integrity. The Commission found it helpful to discuss with you in greater depth the issues surrounding this program in order to gain a better understanding of the context for the institution's actions and the team's findings. As a result, the Commission continues to support the team's concern regarding the consequences, perhaps unintended, which resulted from the re-ordering of the institution's financial priorities. The Commission therefore identified the following areas for further institutional attention and action:

**Ensuring the efficacy of the Bachelor of University Studies (BUS) degree.** In its efforts to maximize the application of institutional resources by shortening the time for baccalaureate degree completion to nine semesters in three years, undue pressures are being placed on both faculty and students. It appears that this is especially affecting the large population of international students, who are mastering language and study skills while expected to work outside the classroom on campus and church-related jobs for a substantial number of hours, and are failing to achieve their learning goals in this compressed time frame.

The Commission is concerned to learn of the extent to which BYUH appears to have issued the Bachelor of University Studies degree to students after they have failed to achieve the intended outcomes in their declared major. According to the team report, this degree program lacks coherent faculty oversight, is not defined by stated learning outcomes, falls short of providing a concentration of in-depth learning expected of a major, is issued to a growing number of students primarily at the behest of an advisor, has not yet been subjected to program review, and shows little promise of preparing students for meaningful employment or future study.

In your presentation to the Commission panel, you and Vice President Checketts recognized that typical institutional procedures for initiating this program were not followed, and a period of insufficient oversight allowed the above-described weaknesses to emerge in this program. The Commission expects that these procedural missteps will not be repeated. BYUH needs to define and consistently implement a rigorous design and approval process for new programs and degrees, ensure that all programs have ongoing and careful oversight, diligently monitor all

publications to ensure an accurate portrayal of each degree program sufficient to inform enrollment decisions, and incorporate new degree planning within the larger mission and operational decisions of the institution. Further, this program, like all programs, must be subject to program review, which will allow it to be evaluated and improved and will assure that it merits a recognized place in the BYUH catalog on par with all other degrees offered. At the Commission meeting, you indicated that many of these steps were being taken. At the time of the next review, the Commission expects to see that such changes are in place, the quality and rigor of this program has been evaluated, and learning outcomes for it have been established and assessed. It is the University's responsibility to bring the program into conformity with WASC expectations. (CFRs 1.1-1.3, 2.1-2.7)

**Achieving financial sustainability and assuring quality programs.** In addition to the immediate concern about the BUS degree, the Commission is concerned that the resetting of financial priorities implemented at the University is also placing unsustainable strains on other parts of the academic enterprise, most especially on the faculty and students. Faculty contracts that call for increased teaching loads restrict time for professional development and other necessary academic work, such as assessment and advising. Larger numbers of credits are being taken online by residential students at least in part because the condensed academic calendar does not allow students to fit required classes into their schedules. No analysis has been undertaken to understand how these changes may be affecting learning. In view of the strategic goal of doubling enrollments in the near future, the necessity for addressing these structural issues becomes even more urgent. The Commission expects BYUH to undertake a careful analysis of the impact of resetting its financial priorities and to make changes that will assure the adequacy of support for the academic programs and the alignment of resources to promote student achievement. (CFRs 2.1, 3.1-3.3, 3.5, 4.1-4.3)

The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Special Visit Report.
2. Continue with the scheduled comprehensive review to begin in spring 2017.
3. Request an Interim Report to be submitted by March 1, 2013, verifying that the following actions were taken regarding the Bachelor of University Studies (BUS) degree: modifications to the University catalog providing more complete information about the program, placement of the program under appropriate faculty oversight, establishment of faculty-created program learning outcomes, and statement of requirements for entry into, and completion of, the BUS program.
4. Request a Special Visit in spring 2014, at which time the University will be expected to demonstrate assessment of program outcomes for at least one cohort of students in the BUS program and completion of a program review for the BUS degree, including reflection of the assessment data. The visit will also address other matters associated with the current financial and academic plan.

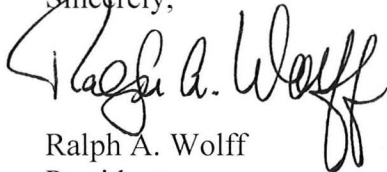
5. Suspend the institution's general degree-level approval for bachelor's degrees until such time as the Commission reviews and approves the University's response to the issues addressed in this letter regarding the BUS program. Please note that this suspension means that BYUH must apply through WASC's substantive change process for approval of any new baccalaureate program it wishes to offer.

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.

In keeping with WASC policy adopted in November 2011, this letter and the underlying team report also will be posted on the WASC website in approximately one week. If you wish to post a response to the letter and/or team report on your own website, WASC will also post a link to that response on its website. Any link that you wish to provide should be forwarded to the attention of Teri Cannon so that it may be included on the WASC website. As noted in the Commission policy, team reports and action letters are foundational for institutional accountability and improvement. Institutions are expected to disseminate these documents throughout the institution for the purposes of promoting ongoing engagement and improvement and encouraging internal communications about specific issues identified in team reports and action letters.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the work that the University undertook in preparing for this accreditation review. WASC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while assuring public accountability. 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/rw

cc: Linda Johnsrud, Commission Chair  
William G. Neal, ALO  
Paul Johnson, Board Chair  
Members of the Special Visit Team  
Richard Winn, WASC Vice President