



July 3, 2001

Philip Pumerantz
President
Western University of Health Sciences
309 East Second Street
Pomona, CA 91766-1854

Dear President Pumerantz:

At its meeting June 20-22, 2001, the Commission considered the report of the evaluation team that visited the Western University of Health Sciences (WUHS) on March 27-30, 2001, the self study prepared by the University for this comprehensive visit, and the University's response to the team report, dated June 5, 2001. The Commission was grateful to have George Charney, Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs; Christopher N. Oberg, Executive Vice President of Finance and Business; and you representing the institution during the discussion.

The Commission noted the rapid change in academic programming that has occurred at WUHS since the last WASC visit. The University has transitioned from essentially a single focus on pioneering education in osteopathic medicine in California to offering a broader base of graduate curricula in the health sciences. It also has a history of successfully serving a diverse student body. There appears to be a continuing commitment to the fundamental mission of the University at all levels. The institution is to be commended for its vision, creativity, and tenacity.

The faculty have demonstrated a strong commitment to innovative teaching and program delivery. Indications of success are contained in the positive data of student performance on national professional examinations. The institution has an effective staff, and the student support services have matured to meet the challenges of a growing student body with diverse needs. There is evidence of genuine commitment to student access, learning, and success at WUHS. Attention recently devoted to assessment is beginning to generate useful data. While there are issues yet to address regarding technology and information resources, progress is being made in developing a new library facility and in the acquisition and uses of technology.

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The Commission endorses the findings of the visiting team and urges they be given serious consideration and action where appropriate by the University. The Commission wishes to highlight several issues:

WASC Substantive Change Policy: WUHS has implemented at least two distance-learning programs. This team and the Commission on Collegiate Nursing commented on the previously reviewed MSN/FNP program. The delivery of the MSN/FNP curriculum appears to be an excellent model. The new and different on-line Masters of Science in Health Sciences-Licensed Physicians Assistant (MSHS-LAPT), however, will require prior approval by the WASC Substantive Change Committee. The University is cautioned to be attentive to accreditation agency policies, especially the requirement of prior approval of all on-line degree programs.

Academic Planning: While the University is to be commended for successfully implementing new academic programs, the Commission noted that since the 1995 comprehensive review WUHS has moved from offering three academic degrees (Doctorate in Osteopathic Medicine and Masters degrees in Health Professions Education and in Physical Therapy) to now offering as many as seven degrees, including a Doctorate in Pharmacy. In addition, the University is in the process of implementing a Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine. At the same time, the University has moved into distance learning, and it has attempted to offer at least one program at an off-campus location. Now there is the need to absorb this extensive growth of programs and disciplines. The Commission cautions the University to more clearly and systematically link academic program planning to institutional priorities, infrastructure and personnel requirements, budgetary analysis and projections, and a broader based consultative process.

Assessment, Program Review, and Planning: The University has made significant progress in developing policies and structures, and implementing practices for assessment and academic planning. Much remains to be done, however, in implementing institutional processes and clarifying roles and responsibilities that will integrate assessment, academic program review, and academic program planning. Beyond regional and specialized accreditation reviews, there is need for internal program review processes that evaluate the integration of the clinical and pre-clinical components of programs, and are built on analyses of assessment information, curriculum goals, and faculty requirements.

Consultative Processes, Governance, and Communication: Communication issues were highlighted from several perspectives. With the rapid expansion of academic programs, and the accompanying growth in students, faculty, budget, and facilities in recent years, the University has yet to create a culture of inclusiveness and effective governance structures and processes. Developing consultative processes and such inclusivity will require focused attention and effort.

Faculty Professional Development and Faculty Workload Policy: Issues regarding faculty workload identified in the Commission's action letter of March 11, 1996 appear not to be fully resolved. All of the programs offered at the graduate level require faculty to keep abreast of developments in their fields, and engage in research/scholarly activity. Support for such efforts is vital for monitoring both the effectiveness of faculty and to advance the professions served by WUHS. The Commission is concerned about the ambiguity surrounding the institutional framework for faculty workload. Workload policies should be aligned with employment, compensation, and promotion criteria, and give proper recognition and support to faculty professional development and scholarly inquiry.

Facilities Planning: Western University has undertaken an innovative approach to acquiring facilities. The University has not only productively gained good facilities for an academic institution through acquisition and conversion of former commercial buildings, but it has significantly contributed to revitalization of an urban area. Looking ahead, University needs to develop a formal facilities master plan that will tie facilities planning to academic planning, and include information resources, library and technology needs.

Finances: While the University's financial management appears disciplined and leaves the institution operating within a balanced budget, recent University expansion has been financed primarily by increasing outstanding debt to \$39 million. The University needs to develop a multi-year financial plan which identifies institutional needs and plans, and includes the costs of managing this debt, implementing new programs and meeting new property and facility needs. Such a plan should also outline anticipated sources of revenue to support these identified needs. In undertaking such planning, it will also be important to broaden participation and stakeholder input as discussed above.

The Commission has acted to:

1. Reaffirm the Accreditation of the Western University of Health Sciences.
2. Schedule the Proposal for the two-stage review to be due on October 15, 2005. Schedule the Preparatory Review in spring 2008, and the Educational Effectiveness Review in spring 2009. The Commission requested that the Institutional Proposal include an addendum which deals with the institution's progress in addressing the issues outlined above. Enclosed is a memorandum providing guidance on the format and content of the Addendum to the Institutional Proposal.

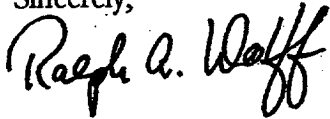
The next scheduled review of the institution will occur under the *Handbook of Accreditation 2001*, which involves significant new Standards and substantially

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different expectations for Institutional Presentations under the new review cycle. The Commission urges the University to review the new *Handbook* and to assess how institutional evidence can be developed prior to the next accreditation review that will make the new process less burdensome and more useful.

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments about this letter and the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Ralph A. Wolff
Executive Director

RW/bm

cc: Marilyn P. Sutton
Suellen Crano
Members of the Team
Fred H. Dorer

Enclosure