March 6, 2015

Dr. Jim J. Adams
President
Life Pacific College
1100 W. Covina Boulevard
San Dimas, CA 91773-3298

Dear President Adams:

At its meetings February 18-20, 2015, the Commission considered the report of the Special Visit team that conducted an onsite review of Life Pacific College (LPC) on September 16-19, 2014. Commission members also reviewed the Special Visit report submitted by Life Pacific College prior to the visit and the institution’s November 21, 2014 response to the visiting team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you; Sam Rockwell, Board of Trustees Chair; Michael Salmeier Vice President, Academic Affairs; Angie Richey, Vice President, Enrollment Management; Todd Eskes, Chief Financial Officer; and, Brian Tomhave, Dean of Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO).

Your comments were helpful in informing the Commission’s deliberations.

As the March 11, 2013 Commission Action Letter made clear, the Commission had raised concerns about Life Pacific College’s sustainability and effectiveness since granting Initial Accreditation in June 2004. Following the spring 2009 Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) and spring 2011 Educational Effectiveness Review (EER), the Commission issued a formal Notice of Concern and scheduled a fall 2012 Special Visit. While the Special Visit team and the Commission noted the progress made by the faculty and administration in developing workload and salary policies; creating student learning assessment processes; establishing an institutional research function, and, relatedly, a system to analyze retention and graduation rates, the Commission continued to express serious concerns with LPC’s financial sustainability, strategic planning, and enrollment management. The Commission also raised concerns related to critical issues with LPC’s leadership and governance. Ultimately, the Commission concluded that LPC was not in substantial compliance with Commission Standards and imposed Probation, scheduling a Special Visit for fall 2014 and requiring LPC to come back into substantial compliance with Commission Standards by that time. In particular, the Commission identified the following areas for attention:

- strengthening senior leadership and the governing board; achieving financial sustainability and enrollment stability; improving retention and graduation rates; and developing strategic planning processes.

Requirements imposed on LPC related to all four WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) Standards. LPC has responded to those requirements as follows:
LPC was required to demonstrate substantial compliance with Standards 1 and 2 of the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation, with particular attention to Criteria for Review (CFR) 1.2, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, and 2.13.

LPC made student success a significant component of the institution’s strategic plan, beginning by creating the Life Pacific College Retention Plan 2014 and the Retention and Student Success Committee (RSS). The evaluator team confirmed that LPC regularly generates, analyzes and makes public retention and graduation rates data. RSS has developed a retention plan that “…includes 12 strategies and 35 initiatives to take place over the next three years with the overarching goal to retain students to degree completion.” According to the team report: “…the most recent cohort graduation data for Life Pacific College shows marked improvement in the four-year graduation rate for the 2010 cohort from the 2009 cohort (+22.6%), and improvement of the six-year rates for the 2007 and 2008 cohorts compared to the 2006 cohort (+12.9 and +7.9% respectively).”

LPC was required to demonstrate substantial compliance with Standard 3 of the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation, with particular attention to CFR 3.1, 3.4, 3.6 and 3.9.

Quoting the evaluator team report: LPC has strengthened “…its financial position by refining its budgeting processes, strategically focusing its expenditures, growing its enrollment, securing the continued support of the Foursquare Church, appointing a new independent auditor with higher education expertise, generating positive operating results, and increasing its net assets.” To respond to the College’s declining enrollment, LPC has expanded degree and program opportunities to “…better meet the educational needs of students while broadening the definition of ministry.”

LPC is commended for appointing a president who, according to the evaluator team is “…recognized and celebrated by all segments of the campus.” The team reported that, “Life Pacific College realigned, reorganized, or added several administrative positions and groups to increase governance effectiveness and efficiency.” LPC is also commended for Board of Trustees efforts to “…reform board culture through its membership and expertise, organization, development efforts, engagement, collaboration and commitment.” The Board of Trustees is exercising appropriate legal and fiduciary authority and partnering with the institution’s leadership to pursue long-term financial viability and academic effectiveness.

LPC was also required to demonstrate substantial compliance with Standard 4 of the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation, focusing on CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.6, and 4.7.

LPC is commended “…for including faculty, staff, students, community and church in the development of a comprehensive and integrated strategic plan.” The evaluator team confirmed appropriate understanding of and engagement with institutional planning among senior leadership and the Board of Trustees. Constitution of the College’s Strategic Planning Committee means that a continuous planning process is in place that, “…with the guidance and oversight of the board, will remain focused on this central task.”

In summary, the Commission finds that Life Pacific College is in substantial compliance with the fourWSCUC Standards. Sustaining these efforts and continually improving are the keys for Life Pacific College to achieve on-going institutional and student success.
The Commission endorses the findings and recommendations of the Special Visit team and wishes to emphasize the following areas for further attention and development:

**Supporting diversity.** LPC was designated a Hispanic Serving Institution in March 2014. This institutional characteristic aligns well with the profile of prospective students in LPC’s target markets. At the same time, it is essential that LPC assess and prepare for “the impact of a more diverse campus.” LPC should evaluate and provide the support services necessary to ensure student success (CFR 1.4).

**Monitoring and improving student enrollment and retention.** Adding new programs reflecting broader student demand and creating the 2014 Retention Plan to foster and monitor student success align well with LPC’s need to stabilize and then grow enrollment. However, these new strategies have only recently been instituted. The systems in place to gauge effectiveness are also new. LPC needs to maintain a continued sense of urgency in the refinement, implementation and monitoring of the College’s retention plan. LPC could include in the College’s plan refinement of “the development of an institutional financial aid philosophy, and a strategy for implementation, in order to advance the College’s recruitment and retention goals.” (CFRs 1.2, 2.10, 2.13).

**Continuing to strengthen financial sustainability.** Resource planning and development includes, in part, the diversification of revenue sources. The evaluator team reports that “Life Pacific College has recently (May 2014) developed a comprehensive advancement plan, integrated with the strategic plan, and with five-year budget projections.” LPC has put in place the staffing, Board of Trustees expertise, donor management software, and a list of prospective donors needed to meet fundraising targets.” It will be important for Life Pacific College to accelerate its efforts to implement the new advancement plan, to raise the necessary revenue and, where funds fall short of the institution’s goals, to be able to modify targets based on actual results (CFR 3.4).

**Regularly evaluating institutional research effectiveness.** WSCUC- accredited institutions are expected to have institutional research (IR) capacity appropriate to the purposes and characteristics of the institution. The evaluator team thoroughly investigated LPC’s response to the Commission’s concerns about the College’s ability to meet these expectations. The team concluded that LPC’s current IR operation, with the support of senior leadership, does have the capability to produce, analyze and disseminate data in a timely fashion. Going forward, LPC should conduct periodic reviews of the IR function to “ensure the suitability and usefulness of the data generated.” In particular, reviews should gauge whether IR’s data production is sustainable. Secondly, reviews should assess the sophistication of data presentation and determine which data are most relevant so that, “…where a deeper rather than a broader analysis of the data are appropriate,” data results can more effectively be used for “strategic decision-making” across the institution (CFR 4.2).

The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Special Visit Report.

2. Remove Probation.

4. Confirm the scheduled Mid-Cycle Review (MCR) in spring 2015.

5. Request a Progress Report due in fall 2015. The institution will be expected to address the following: 1) enrollment, providing student enrollment data from the fall 2015 census and comparing it with similar data from the previous two fall terms; 2) retention, providing fall 2014 to fall 2015 retention data and comparing them with retention data from the previous two fall-to-fall periods; 3) diversity, providing data on students, faculty, staff and board members disaggregated by ethnicity, race, and gender; and, 4) advancement, providing data about funds raised in relation to budget projections and, where needed, how fundraising plans have been modified to reflect results.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of Life Pacific College’s governing board in one week. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be widely disseminated throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement and to support the institution’s response to the specific issues identified in this letter. 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.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that Life Pacific College undertook in preparing for and supporting this Special Visit 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 participation in 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/mam

Cc: William A. Ladusaw, Commission Chair
    Brian Tomhave, ALO
    Sam Rockwell, Board Chair
    Members of the Special Visit team
    Maureen A. Maloney, WSCUC Vice President