July 15, 2015

Dr. Rob Riordan
President and ALO
High Tech High Graduate School of Education
2861 Womble Road
San Diego, CA 92106-6025

Dear Dr. Riordan:

At its meeting June 17-19, 2015, the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review for Initial Accreditation (EER-IA) team that conducted an Onsite Review of High Tech High Graduate School of Education March 4-6, 2015. Commission members also reviewed the EER-IA institutional report submitted by the institution prior to the visit, as well as the institution’s response to the team report dated May 7, 2015. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Dr. Paul Heckman, Board of Trustees’ Chair and Dr. Stephen Hamilton, President-elect. Your comments were very helpful in informing the Commission’s deliberations.

This visit was scheduled to evaluate the institution’s status with regard to the Commission’s Standards of Accreditation; the team’s findings are addressed below. The team also inquired into the institution’s response to issues identified for attention by the CPR-Initial Accreditation team, from the visit conducted in October 2013. Those issues included the creation of a graduate school culture, the integrity of the credit hour calculation, Board of Trustee composition and development, faculty governance, and strategic planning. The findings of the EER-IA team with respect to these matters are likewise addressed in the following.

Based on the team’s report and the other information sources as identified above, the Commission has determined the following with regard to the institution’s compliance with each of theWSCUC Standards of Accreditation.

**Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives**

The Commission has determined that the institution has met this Standard at a substantial level.
The Commission commends the institution’s achievements under this Standard for the alignment of its strategic priorities and core values with the mission, the expansion of its professional development and outreach program, and its consistent adherence to practices of transparency and integrity. The team noted “that there is honesty about where the institution falls short and they are making good progress to fully live out their mission.” The institution is expected in a subsequent review to give specific attention to whether the Diversity Task Force should become a standing faculty committee, at the conclusion of the scheduled strategic planning process. In addition, “the GSE is encouraged to explicitly discuss student handbook policies with students at the outset of the program.”

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions

The Commission has determined that the institution has met this Standard at a substantial level.

The Commission commends the institution’s achievements under this Standard for its careful attention to the need for academic rigor commensurate with a graduate-level program. “During the pre-visit review of the documents provided, and the on campus visit, team members became convinced that [prior] issues had been addressed and equitable solutions were developed.” Of particular note is the successful creation of the new course in Core Values and Foundations, in which all students matriculate. The team noted that, “faculty and staff are [to be] commended for developing programs that are so meaningful for the students.” It is noteworthy that GSE Masters graduates who wish to continue their education may have their degrees accepted completely and with credit toward the Ed.D. program in Educational Leadership at the University of California, San Diego. The institution has likewise modified and codified its credit hour policy to bring it into conformance with WSCUC Standards. The institution is expected in a subsequent review to consider the development of a formal student governance system, especially as the student body grows in number.

Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

The Commission has determined that the institution has met this Standard at a substantial level.

With respect to personnel, the Commission commends the institution for maintaining an enviable student faculty ratio, for its ongoing commitment to greater diversity among its faculty and staff, and for the fact “that ongoing faculty development is a salient feature of the institution involving both core and adjunct faculty.” With respect to fiscal, physical, and financial resources, the institution is to be commended for a robust business model that supports a broadening of tuition revenues, for its prowess in attracting external grant support, and for a sturdy information resources infrastructure. Board policies and governance structures conform to WSCUC expectations, and HTHGSE demonstrates a
strong commitment to Board development and strategic planning. The resource allocation process is collegial and comprehensive. Finally, the Commission notes the accomplishment of identifying, funding, and constructing a new building to be devoted to HTHGSE. The team encourages the institution to maintain a careful eye on policies related to such activities as faculty governance as it grows in size.

Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement.

The Commission has determined that the institution has met this Standard at a substantial level.

The Commission commends the institution’s achievements under this Standard for “highly participative and inclusive learning and improvement processes,” consistent with its overall culture. Multiple forms of assessment inform curricular design and pedagogy. “Regarding Program Review, the Visiting Team concluded that the process was highly developed across all the required elements, process, annual feedback on assessment efforts, and student experience,” with the result that a change has been made towards a single M.Ed. degree. As the team noted, “it is clear the GSE has done considerable work to assess programs and use evidence for improvement.”

The Commission also endorses the recommendations as set forth in the EER-IA team report, and encourages the institution to respond to those recommendations during its reaffirmation review.

In view of the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the EER-IA Visit Report
2. Grant Initial Accreditation for five years
3. Schedule the Offsite Review in fall 2019
4. Schedule the Accreditation Visit in spring 2020
5. Schedule the Mid-Cycle Review in spring 2018.

In taking this action to grant Initial Accreditation, the Commission confirms that High Tech High Graduate School of Education has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments to Student Learning and Success; Quality and Improvement; and Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Accountability. The Commission also confirms that the institution has successfully completed this review conducted under the 2103 Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review, the institution is expected to maintain its compliance with WSCUC Standards and uphold its
commitment to continuous quality improvement. It is also expected to continue its effort and progress as delineated in the team report.

Accreditation status is not granted retroactively. Institutions granted the status of accreditation must use the following statement if they wish to describe the status publicly:

High Tech High Graduate School of Education is accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), 985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100, Alameda, CA 94501, 510.748.9001.

The accredited status of a program should not be misrepresented. The accreditation granted by WSCUC refers to the quality of the institution as a whole. Because institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program at the institution, statements such as “this program is accredited” or “this degree is accredited” are incorrect and misleading. The phrase “fully accredited” is also to be avoided, since no partial accreditation is possible.

The Commission stipulates that this action encompasses the degrees offered by High Tech High Graduate School of Education at the time of this action, as listed in the attached Consolidated List of Currently Conferred Degrees. In keeping with the WSCUC Policy on Degree Level Approval, High Tech High Graduate School of Education is designated as having an "I" (Individual) status for each of the degree levels currently being offered. The University is approved to offer only the degrees listed in the attached consolidated list of degrees at its current locations. Please consult the Substantive Change Manual and confer with your WSCUC liaison about any proposed new degree programs, off-campus sites, online offerings, and/or changes in governance or ownership, to determine if these matters should be approved in advance by WSCUC.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of High Tech High Graduate School of Education’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 High Tech High Graduate School of Education website and widely disseminated 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.
Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that High Tech High Graduate School of Education 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 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/cno

Cc:    William Ladusaw, Commission Chair
       Paul Heckman, Board Chair
       Members of the EER-Initial Accreditation team
       Christopher Oberg, Vice President