July 8, 2016

Father Gladstone Stevens, S.S.
President and Rector
St. Patrick’s Seminary and University
320 Middlefield Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025-3596

Dear President Stevens:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning St. Patrick’s Seminary and University (SPSU) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting June 22-24, 2016. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Special Visit to SPSU March 2-4, 2016. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by SPSU prior to the Special Visit and the institution’s May 27, 2016 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and ALO Jon Kirwan. 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 Special Visit team report that focused on:
   a. Strategic Planning
   b. Assessment
   c. Program Review
   d. Cultural Competence
   e. Organizational Structure
   f. Technological Infrastructure

2. Continue the Formal Notice of Concern

3. Schedule a Special Visit in spring 2018 to address:
   a. Strategic Planning
      i. Completing those goals and objectives with deadlines of December 2017 or earlier
      ii. Working toward achieving a sustainable enrollment
      iii. Establishing a realistic development plan
   b. Educational Effectiveness
      i. Designing assessment tools for department- or program-level outcomes that measure whether students have achieved competency on the outcomes
      ii. Aligning course-level and program-level outcomes with SPSU’s mission and vision
iii. Adhering to the established schedule for program review
iv. Developing a template for the program review self-study
v. Improving the annual evaluation of students by making the process more consistent and transparent

c. Cultural Competency
i. Defining and assessing the attitudes or skills needed by seminarians to serve “the Roman Catholic Church in the ministerial context of the Pacific Region”
ii. Identifying where in the curriculum, the co-curriculum, and pastoral year seminarians receive training in these attitudes or skills

d. Organizational Structure
i. Delegating authority to administrative leaders to enact changes in their areas of responsibility
ii. Designing clear communication and transparent decision-making processes

Commendations

The team commended St. Patrick’s Seminary and University for the following:

1. Demonstrating integrity, transparency and openness throughout the review process. The institutional report was honest and candid. All those who were interviewed during the visit, as described by the team, were forthcoming and straightforward in sharing their experiences.

2. Making considerable progress in a short period of time in the area of program review. The institution completed a full cycle of review for one program and articulated clear next steps in the process, including developing systematic procedures, and a schedule for additional reviews.

3. Making considerable progress in a short period of time in the area of assessment. SPSU developed or revised its course learning outcomes, began to align them with department outcomes, and operationalized outcomes so that they are now observable and measurable.

4. Improving its technological infrastructure and support as well as implementing new and upgraded software systems. SPSU adopted the Populi cloud-based college management system; the library is transitioning to an electronic catalogue and has upgraded its databases to enhance access to scholarly and other digital publications; and the institution has made a concerted effort to improve Wi-Fi and technical support services through an external vendor.

5. Investing considerable time and energy in faculty development. Of particular note is the training that has taken place in the areas of assessment and the new Populi system. The 18-month faculty development program has advanced the institution’s knowledge of the importance of assessment.
6. Revamping its organizational structure and adding dedicated, experientially diverse and qualified employees.

Recommendations

Despite the team’s commendations, the Commission is deeply concerned that the university is in danger of being in non-compliance with the Standards. Turnover in faculty, staff, and administrators has led to questions about the institution’s ability to sustain itself and about the role of the governing board in ensuring the viability of St. Patrick’s Seminary and University. At the time of the spring 2018 Special Visit, the Commission expects the university to demonstrate strengthened compliance with the Standards by providing evidence that it has addressed the following:

1. Strategic planning. Continue to work on the strategic plan to accomplish the goals and objectives by the deadlines identified. In particular, St. Patrick’s Seminary and University needs to develop strategies that will result in sustainable enrollment and that will generate revenue to ensure the institution’s financial viability. (CFRs 3.4, 4.1, 4.5, 4.6)

2. Assessment. Move to the next level of institutional engagement in assessment by designing multiple methods of assessment for each department and/or program-level outcome, consistently aligning course outcomes with program outcomes and with mission and vision, and creating assessment tools that accurately determine if competence has been achieved. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 4.3)

3. Evaluation of seminarrians. Strengthen and improve the annual evaluation of students, making the process consistent, clear, and transparent. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.6)

4. Program review. Build upon the steps taken to articulate a coherent and meaningful program review process by adhering to the program review schedule, developing a template or standardized set of questions for the program review self-study, and integrating program review findings into budgeting and strategic planning. The Commission appreciated learning that another program review is now completed and a third is slated to begin in the fall. (CFRs 2.7, 4.3, 4.4)

5. Cultural competence. Articulate and formalize efforts to develop the cultural competence of the seminarrians throughout their holistic academic, co-curricular, and pastoral formation phases. Specifically, the institution is expected to define and assess the attitudes or skills needed by seminarrians to serve effectively “the Roman Catholic Church in the ministerial context of the Pacific Region” and to align the institution’s educational programs with this vision. (CFRs 1.4, 2.3)

6. Organizational operations. Improve upon the new organizational structure by empowering administrative leaders to enact change in their areas of responsibility
and by designing clear communication and transparent decision-making processes. (CFRs 3.2, 3.6, 3.7)

A Formal Notice of Concern provides notice to the institution that, while it currently meets WSCUC Standards, it is in danger of being found in non-compliance with one or more Standards if current trends or findings continue. If the issues are not addressed within four years from the time of the original Formal Notice of Concern (which was July 2014), a sanction could be imposed as described in the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of St. Patrick’s Seminary and University 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 SPSU 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 St. Patrick’s Seminary and University undertook in preparing for and supporting this 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,

Mary Ellen Petrisko
President

MEP/ bgd

Cc: William Ladusaw, Commission Chair
    Jon Kirwan, ALO
    Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, Board Chair
    Members of the Special Visit team
    Barbara Gross Davis, Vice President