July 10, 2012

Frank Wu
Chancellor and Dean
UC Hastings College of the Law
200 McAllister Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Chancellor Wu:

At its meeting June 13-15, 2012, the Commission considered the report of the team that conducted a comprehensive review of UC Hastings College of the Law (Hastings) with a visit held April 2-5, 2012. The Commission also had access to Hastings’ report and exhibits submitted prior to the visit. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you and your colleagues, Shauna Marshall, academic dean; Jenni Parrish, accreditation liaison officer; and Andrea Welles, WASC accreditation coordinator. Your comments were helpful in informing the Commission’s deliberations.

In keeping with WASC policy, Hastings completed a comprehensive self-study that addressed in detail all four Standards of Accreditation and the related Criteria for Review. The report was, in the words of the team, “well organized, coherent and extensive, and reflected enthusiasm for developing a culture of assessment.”

The Commission acknowledged that Hastings is accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA), its designated institutional accredditor, and by the Association of American Law Schools. Hastings is seeking accreditation by WASC because it is diversifying its programs beyond the traditional Juris Doctor and LLM degree for foreign students and intends to offer a new Master of Studies in Law (MSL) degree for health professionals and a Master of Laws in Law and Science as an advanced degree for lawyers.

Hastings was found eligible to apply for WASC accreditation in June 2011. In granting eligibility, the Eligibility Review Committee identified three areas for attention prior to the visit. These included: building the capacity for new degree programs as they are developed and launched; developing student learning outcomes and methods to assess them; and creating a program review process that moves beyond specialized accreditation and can be applied to the JD program and the new programs.

UC Hastings is an established and effective institution with a long history of solid performance in a wide array of indicators, including completion rates, bar pass rates, alumni success and contributions to the community, a well-qualified and collegial faculty, faculty contribution to legal research and scholarship, important innovations in clinical training, and a record of sound plans and stable finances.
Of special note on this review is Hastings’ strong support for student learning outcomes assessment, which only recently is being adopted by some leading law schools. As noted by the team, “Hastings has made a significant effort to learn about and engage the institution in assessment of student learning and has adopted appropriately framed Program Learning Outcomes that reflect substantial faculty involvement.”

As noted below, the Commission found that UC Hastings demonstrated that it was in substantial compliance with Commission Standards and it granted the College initial accreditation, with issues to be further addressed in a Special Visit in spring 2013.

The Commission endorses the commendations and recommendations of the team and wishes to emphasize the following areas for further attention and development:

**Developing and refining assessment of student learning.** As noted above, the Commission commends the faculty and academic leadership at Hastings for developing an appropriate set of learning outcomes for the JD and existing LLM program, which have been modified to serve as the outcomes for the new MSL program to be launched in fall 2012. The next stage of Hastings’ growing capacity for assessment will be to finalize its plans for assessment of these outcomes and to create useful methods and tools to effectuate those plans. The Commission supports the team’s recommendation that Hastings adopt “formative and summative assessment techniques to measure student learning…, including the use of multiple strategies….” (CFRs 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 4.6-4.8)

**Formalizing program review and extending it to all academic programs.** As a single-discipline professional school, Hastings has conducted systematic review of its JD and LLM programs on an ongoing cyclical basis in conjunction with its strategic planning and renewal of ABA accreditation every seven years. Given that it will soon be offering four degree programs, three of which do not fall within the purview of ABA approval, Hastings needs to develop a formal program review process that can be extended to all programs. Under WASC Standards, this process should encompass a wide variety of evidence relating to program effectiveness, including data on student learning, and should include comparative data, utilize external reviewers, and be connected to planning and budgeting. The Commission was encouraged by the strong institutional support to develop and adopt a formal program review process. (CFRs 2.7, 4.4)

**Monitoring the strategic plan and enhancing capacity for data-based planning and decision making.** Hastings has created a bold strategic plan to reduce the size of the JD program and offer new, law-related programs in important, emerging areas of need. The collaboration with the University of California, San Francisco that has led to this innovation is commendable. As the plan gets underway, careful monitoring will be required so that Hastings can make adjustments to “key financial assumptions” and can understand the impact of the plan on the diversity of the student body and the support for student success. Related is the need to have a “robust institutional research enterprise” that will provide data for planning and decision making and to build out the technology components of the strategic plan. (CFRs 3.5, 3.7, 4.1-4.3, 4.5)
Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Special Visit team report.

2. Grant initial accreditation to University of California Hastings College of the Law.

3. Request a Special Visit in spring 2013 to review progress on the issues raised in the team report and identified in this letter:

   a. Assessment of student learning. The team would expect to see any refinements to the learning outcomes for the programs, including outcomes for the planned LLM; assessment plans for all programs; and initial results of assessment.

   b. Program review. The team would expect that a program review process will have been adopted and a cycle of program reviews established with special attention to the new programs.

   c. Strategic plan. The team would expect to see an analysis of the implementation of the plans, including financial and enrollment data, and other impacts on the law school, and to learn of progress in building a more robust institutional research function and developing an information technology plan.

In taking this action to grant initial accreditation, the Commission confirms that University of California Hastings College of the Law has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness. Between this action and the time of the next review, the institution is expected to continue its progress.

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:

University of California Hastings College of the Law is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Senior College and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 985 Atlantic Avenue, #100, Alameda, CA 94501, (510) 748-9001.

The phrase “fully accredited” is to be avoided, since no partial accreditation is possible. The accredited status of a program should not be misrepresented. The accreditation granted by WASC 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 like “this program is accredited” or “this degree is accredited” are incorrect and misleading.

The Commission stipulates that this action encompasses the degrees offered and planned by Hastings at the time of this action. In keeping with the WASC Policy on Degree Level Approval, Hastings is designated as having an "I" (Individual) status for each of the degree levels currently being offered. This means that all new degree programs initiated by the institution will require
prior approval through WASC's Substantive Change process. Degree programs that have been reviewed and included under this action may be extended to other campuses without prior Substantive Change action.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to President Mark Yudof and the chair of the UC Board of Regents 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 on Friday, July 13. 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 extensive work that the College undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WASC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while assuring public accountability, and we are grateful for your continued support of our process. 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/tc

cc: Linda Johnsrud, Commission Chair
Jenni Parrish, ALO
Sherry Lansing, Board of Regents Chair
Mark Yudof, president, University of California
American Bar Association
Members of the EER team
Therese A. Cannon

Attachment: List of Degrees
Degree Level Approval Policy
List of approved degrees – UC Hastings College of the Law
June 2012

Juris Doctor (JD)
Master of Laws (LLM)/International
Master of Laws (LLM) in Law and Science
Master of Studies in Law (MSL)
Degree-Level Approval Policy

The Commission establishes three categories of degree-level approval for the purposes of accreditation and substantive change processes, as defined below. Each institution is designated by the Commission as having one of the three categories of approval at each degree level — associate’s, bachelor’s, master’s, professional doctorate, and research doctorate. (In a few cases, institutions accredited by the Senior College Commission also award associate degrees, and in such cases, the Commission shall designate the level of approval for that degree level as well.)

1. **General Approval.** General approval permits an institution to initiate degree programs at the specified degree level(s) without prior review and approval by the Substantive Change Committee or the Commission. Institutions may qualify for general approval at a specified degree level if they have offered 10 or more degree programs at the specified degree level in five or more different disciplinary areas or fields for at least 10 years, and have demonstrated through the accreditation review process the quality of both the degree programs offered and the processes used to initiate, monitor and review degree programs at that level.

The institution is responsible for reporting to the Commission any new degree programs initiated under its general approval as part of its Annual Report. The institution is also responsible for demonstrating, at the time of its comprehensive review, that it has monitored the quality of new programs through assessment, program review and other means that are linked to program improvement. In addition, the institution is responsible for identifying clear outcomes and quality performance indicators for each degree, which are regularly tracked to support review and improvement of degree programs individually, and programs offered at that degree level collectively.

2. **Specified Approval.** Specified approval permits an institution to initiate new degree programs without prior Substantive Change Committee or Commission approval, within specified disciplinary areas or fields and within one or more specified degree levels. Institutions may qualify for specified approval if they have offered five or more degree programs within a specified field for at least 10 years, and have demonstrated through the accreditation review process the quality both of the degree programs and of the processes used to initiate, monitor and review degree programs at that level within the specified field.

For example, the Commission may grant specified approval at the master’s level in the general field of theology to an institution that has offered six master’s programs in theology for 12 years. With this approval, new master’s programs in theology can be offered at that institution without prior review by WASC. However, new programs in other fields, such as education, would still need to be reviewed and approved prior to initiation, through the substantive change process.

It should be noted that specified approval is given for approved degree levels only. If an institution wants to offer a degree in the same field at a lower or higher level, it must submit an application to the Substantive Change Committee. In the example above, the institution would be required to submit a substantive change application to offer a PhD or BA in theology.

Upon being granted specified degree-granting approval, the institution is responsible for reporting to the Commission any new degree programs initiated under its specified approval as part of its Annual Report, and for demonstrating at the time of its comprehensive review that it has monitored the quality of new programs through assessment, program review, and other means that are linked to program improvement. In addition, the institution is responsible for identifying clear outcomes and quality performance indicators for each degree, which are regularly tracked to support review and improvements of degree programs individually, and programs offered at the degree level collectively.

3. **Individual Program Approval.** Individual program approval requires an institution to seek prior review and approval by the Substantive Change Committee and Commission before implementing any new
degree program at the designated level. Each subsequent program at that degree level must continue to be reviewed and approved by the Substantive Change Committee and, in some cases, by the Commission, until such time as specified or general approval is granted at that level.

After the Commission has approved the program(s), the institution is responsible for demonstrating at the time of its next review that it has monitored the quality of new programs through assessment, program review, and other means that are linked to program improvement. In addition, the institution is responsible for identifying clear outcomes and quality performance indicators for each degree, which are regularly tracked to support review and improvements of degree programs individually, and programs offered at the degree level collectively.

Institutions are designated for one of the three categories of approval at each level and therefore may have different kinds of approvals at different degree levels. For example, an institution may have general approval at the bachelor’s and master’s degree levels, but individual degree approval at the doctoral level. If an institution later meets the definition established above for a different degree-level approval, the institution may request a change in designation. No change will be permitted without review of a proposal requesting the change and a site review that finds that the institution meets the requirements for the proposed approval set forth above and has both capacity and demonstrated educational effectiveness for the degree-level approval requested. To the extent possible, such reviews will be incorporated into scheduled accreditation reviews.

The Commission may also request additional reports or follow-up visits and may modify the institution’s status based on the results of accreditation reviews. Notwithstanding a previously designated approval, institutions under sanction may be required to submit all new degree programs for prior review and approval as a condition of the sanction. The designation of degree-level approval shall be an official part of the institution’s accreditation record but shall not be made public.