REPORT ON THE
STRUCTURAL CHANGE
SITE VISIT

To: KGI/Minerva Schools at KGI

Change in Mission and New Degree Level
Distance Education BS in Social Sciences

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Fran Horvath, First Reader
Karen Dunn-Haley, Second Reader
JoAnn Carter-Wells, Third Reader
William Cash, Fourth Reader

The evaluation team in conducting its review was able to evaluate the institution under the Commission Standards and therefore submits this Report to the Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for action and to the institution for consideration.
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SECTION I – Overview and Context

A. Description of the Institution and the Proposed Change

Background Information
Keck Graduate Institute of Applied Life Sciences (KGI), located in Claremont, CA, is a private, not for profit institution offering masters and research doctorate degrees. Its stated mission is, “Keck Graduate Institute is dedicated to education and research aimed at translating into practice, for the benefit of society, the power and potential of the life sciences.” In fall 2012, KGI had an enrollment of 168.25 FTE. There are currently no undergraduate programs at KGI. KGI has Individual degree level authority for all levels of degree programs.

KGI was founded in 1997 with a $50 million grant from the W.M. Keck Foundation. The first member of KGI’s faculty was hired in 1998 and the inaugural class was enrolled in 2000. Initial accreditation was granted in February 2004.

Relevant Accreditation History
KGI’s initial degree was a two-year professional science degree called the Master of Bioscience (MBS). It was designed to educate scientifically-oriented individuals for leadership roles in the pharmaceutical, biotech, medical device, and diagnostics industries through an interdisciplinary curriculum that integrates science, engineering, management, and bioethics. In 2006, the WASC Commission approved a substantive change proposal for a Ph.D. in Applied Life Sciences. In 2007, the Commission approved a joint Ph.D. program between KGI and Claremont Graduate University in Computational and Systems Biology. KGI then developed two new masters programs, a one-year Postdoctoral Professional Masters in Bioscience Management, and a two-year Master of Science degree in Applied Life Sciences. KGI currently has two PhD programs (Applied Life Sciences and Computational and Systems Biology). KGI recently applied for and received approval for a Doctor of Pharmacy degree.

Nature of The Change and The Impact on The Institution If Approved
Keck Graduate Institute, which since its inception has offered only graduate level programs, seeks to begin offering undergraduate degrees thus creating a change in mission. KGI is also seeking the approval of the first undergraduate degree program—a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Sciences. Eventually, KGI expects to submit four additional programs for WASC approval: BS in Natural Sciences, BS in Computational Sciences, BA in Arts and Humanities and BS in Business. Ultimately, the new bachelors programs are expected to reach a total enrollment of 8,000.

All courses in the undergraduate programs will be taught in seminar mode in a synchronous online environment. Students will spend their first year in San Francisco, CA then move each term to a new location in various parts of the world. The curriculum is also designed to reinforce what KGI calls “habits of mind” and “foundational concepts” (skills and key concepts to develop critical analysis, creative thinking, and communication). The first year of the program introduces these concepts in four courses which are then reinforced throughout the remaining years. The first year grades are considered “living” grades and are expected to improve across the four years.
as the student demonstrates progress. Students select a major and a concentration in the sophomore year.

As part of this program development, KGI has entered into a contractual relationship with the Minerva Project to provide a proprietary instructional platform which can be used to facilitate teaching of small seminar courses. Minerva will also be providing student services both in the U.S. and abroad including residence halls, orientation, financial aid, career services, recruitment and admissions. The undergraduate programs will form a new school within KGI called Minerva Schools at KGI (MSKGI) in addition to the two currently existing KGI schools. The reporting relationship of the Deans at MSKGI will be the same as the other schools.

While undergraduate programs are not specifically part of the current KGI strategic plan, KGI seeks to implement aspects of its plan through the Minerva partnership. Themes from this plan that would be fostered by the Minerva partnership include active learning and recruiting a diverse student population in a curriculum with global awareness. Classroom technology and assessment practices would also be impacted through the Minerva platform. The overall vision of MSKGI was described by the CEO of Minerva Project not as a reinventing of higher education but as taking already existing components and methodologies and blending them in a different way. In particular, the traditional lecture hall will not be part of this program. Learning will take place not in traditional classrooms but within synchronous online seminars that have a face-to-face element, as well as within co-curricular activities in the cities and in the residence halls.

B. Description of the Team’s Review Process

A four-member panel of the Substantive Change Committee reviewed the proposal submission and all relevant reports and documents in preparation for the visit. At the end of the initial proposal conference call, the team members identified areas for further investigation during the site visit. Working with the ALO, the team lead developed an agenda for the one-day visit to cover all those areas to help verify the capacity for KGI to undertake this change in mission as well as the new undergraduate degree. Additional documents were requested and provided on the day of the visit.

During the visit, meetings were held with the President of KGI, the Deans of Natural Sciences and Arts and Sciences of MSKGI, the CEO/CFO of the Minerva Project and several other key individuals from Minerva including the Chief Student Officer, Chief Product Officer (who handles technology) and Chief Marketing Officer. Topics included student-related issues of student services and program logistics, faculty-related issues such as types, workload and training, assessment and academic issues of admissions procedures and assessment. Technology was also an important issue since the teaching and assessment methodologies are primarily through synchronous online means. A separate session for the team included a live demonstration of the instructional platform. The team was satisfied with the financial information provided in the proposals, so the site visit did not involve further inquiry into finances.
SECTION II – Evaluation of the Proposed Change

This section describes the key issues identified by the Substantive Change team in its letter and those explored during its visit of MSKGI. The site visit took place at the San Francisco offices of Minerva Project since technology, student services and assessment were key issues and all are supported by various aspects of the Minerva Project.

A. Student-Related: Orientation, Student Services, Logistics, Cultural Issues (CFRs 1.4, 1.8, 2.11, 2.13, 3.5)

Prior to the visit, the team requested additional information about student-related issues:
1. Student orientation (both pre-departure and upon arrival)
2. Plans for scaling up student residence capacity as enrollment increases in subsequent years
3. Job descriptions for various student life positions
4. Additional information on MSKGI plans to address intercultural issues
5. How student movement would be tracked from one international site to another as students progress through their program.

During the visit, the team had opportunity to review these materials and to direct questions to appropriate administrators as they explained their content.

Comments
The team learned that MSKGI expects their students to be experienced international travelers, to be multi-lingual speakers (at least English and their native tongue for international students; English and a foreign language for those from the United States), to be adventurous, have a global perspective, and to be digital natives. Those who have not yet traveled and who don’t speak a second language are not likely to be admitted. The cost of transportation is included in the projected budget, but will be borne directly by the students (and their families), and not included in tuition or fees.

Present student life staff at MSKGI are experienced in study abroad programs and in dealing with the types of issues and problems that may occur when students travel to and study in a culture different from the one in which they were raised. It is their intention, as the enrollment increases, to hire additional staff with experience in this international environment. MSKGI will be conducting their pre-departure orientation using the Minerva platform; the team was shown sample contents of an orientation to Beijing. Included in the packet were logistics for traveling to the city, pre-travel activities, what to pack, a description of student housing, how much money to bring, how to communicate in China, what to expect upon arriving, how to use public transportation, health and safety precautions, and internship expectations. Upon arrival, students will participate in a five-day orientation that includes student and onsite staff introductions, extra- and co-curricular activities to build interpersonal relationships and acquaint students with the city, an introduction to academics and the Minerva platform, safety and residence hall guidelines, and student support services. A special focus is being given to cultural intelligence and intercultural competency, helping the students understand differences in the various cultures represented among them, with the intent to prepare them for their interactions with each other and with the culture in which they are studying and living.
Since their initial proposal, MSKGI has slightly adjusted their schedule for implementing their international sites. The first two years (2014 and 2015) will be using only their San Francisco residence hall(s), followed by one or more sites each in Brazil and Europe. They anticipate that residential capacity will be readily available in Brazil by 2016 as a result of the World Cup and Olympics that will have been hosted by that time in that country; similarly, their regional manager in Europe is already looking for sites in Berlin, Barcelona, Amsterdam, and London. Sites in India and Hong Kong will follow, as well as New York City, Cape Town, and Sydney. Criteria for these sites include their being cultural and financial centers, having adequate housing in a safe location accessible by public transportation, availability of internships, and being in open and free societies (hence the choice of Hong Kong rather than Shanghai).

Minerva Project already has six regional managers (RMs) in place, responsible for building and growing successful recruitment and partnership operations in China, India, North America, South America, Europe, and Africa. They will recruit students and manage Minerva’s operations in the region, including sourcing residence halls for students and hiring the appropriate staff. The team received job descriptions for the RMs, residence life managers, residence assistants (who, after the first year, will be current MSKGI students from previous classes), and on-site coordinators.

The information provided in the document packet, as explained by Minerva Project student life staff, and their responses to queries from the team indicates that they have given careful study to this aspect of their proposed program, and that they are prepared to deal with foreseeable contingencies as they roll out their programs and, over the next few years, increase the number of students that they are serving. Student information, including tracking student location, will be part of the Minerva platform. In response to team query, Minerva Project indicated that this area will continue to be developed before and during the pilot class.

B. Faculty: Roles and Responsibilities, Faculty Coordinators, Workload, Hiring (CFRs 2.1, 2.4, 2.8, 3.1-3.3)

Prior to the visit, the team requested the following documents and information from MSKGI:
1. Job descriptions for:
   - Teaching Faculty
   - Faculty Course Designer
   - Faculty Coordinator
2. Typical faculty workload
3. Faculty development plan

The team also received a curriculum vitae for the newly hired Project Manager.

Comments
There are two different types of faculty within the MSKGI: instructional faculty and course designers. Course designers are paid only to create content including syllabi and selection of materials. Such faculty have no long-term relationship with MSKGI. Teaching faculty, as with all KGI faculty, do not have tenure status and work on limited-term contract. All courses will be taught online in synchronous mode in a flipped classroom approach with all teaching faculty following the same syllabus for the same course. All courses are small seminars and teaching faculty are required to use the learning platform.
Instructional faculty are expected to teach, hold office hours, advise and do standard committee work within the school. The full-time faculty workload document provides a specific breakdown of these for a total of 30 hours a week for teaching workload. The remainder of the time can be spent on research. The September to April academic year also allows for four months of research time in the summer.

MSKGI expects the faculty to come from several sources: 1) new doctorates; 2) emeritus faculty; 3) dual career couples; 4) faculty unhappy with the job opportunities in their locality; and 5) faculty who failed to receive tenure but have an excellent teaching record. The visit team expressed concerns about turnover during the conference call. MSKGI has now moved to three year renewable contracts in order to help with consistency of the student experience. MSKGI faculty will be paid more than the typical non-tenure track faculty at other institutions.

Faculty are provided training in the Minerva platform that includes assessment tools. All classes are in seminar format of approximately 20 students and are videotaped and coded for assessment afterward. To manage faculty development, MSKGI will hire faculty coordinators who will oversee regular faculty meetings and facilitate communication in addition to training. As the faculty grows, the numbers of coordinators will increase as well.

C. Technology: Platform, Support, Training (CFRs 2.10, 2.13, 3.5)

As an outgrowth of the initial conference call, the team was interested in additional technology-related issues during the site visit including:
1. Technology support for students
2. Implications for using technology to mediate educational delivery in an international context
3. Assessment for readiness in working in an online environment
4. Platform

The team also wanted to experience a live demonstration of the platform with team members as “students.”

Comments
There was a concern about on-site technology support for students in the various global settings and options that might be provided locally or at a distance, such as software upgrades, multimedia tools, hardware problems (laptops and tablets), video and audio enhancements, mobile application issues, cloud archival requirements, Wi-Fi and data delivery, etc. MSKGI will have an agreement with the Claremont Consortium Library and will pay all incremental costs for support of their students’ library needs. However, the team had a specific concern regarding the ability of students to use the online library resources given the time difference from international locations or having access to a librarian under the “ask-the-librarian” environment. However, students will not get to these international sites until 2016, and the team encourages MSKGI to pursue whatever contractual arrangements or MOUs might be necessary to provide this access at each location.
A standard computer protocol was not described nor any technology coverage for the pilot cohort. The team was unable to ascertain from the proposed Residence Hall schematic if the “communal spaces and meeting rooms” as outlined in the proposal included lab type facilities or the ability of students to work independently or produce any documents needing access to additional peripheral devices such as printers, scanners, webcams, specialized multimedia software, etc.

The team understands that technological support will be provided by phone, email and chat to students at the international sites and that on-site support is not currently planned. The team realizes that MSKGI still have several years in which to work through these logistics and encourages MSKGI to continue working on appropriate contracts as well as ensuring that students do not incur costs for this support.

The team was also interested in the role of technology as a factor in the international city selections and especially around issues of the bandwidth infrastructure, wireless environment, ISPs, etc. The team learned that technology capabilities were indeed a large factor in the selection of locations and had impacted the recent decision about moving from Shanghai to Hong Kong in establishing a residential setting.

The admissions process includes a wide variety of multilevel and multimodal assessments; however, there is no assessment of readiness for working in an online environment. The team learned that MSKGI did not feel that this is necessary since the students are digital natives. Students who actively engage in the recruitment process will be demonstrating their technological prowess as they gather information, interact with staff and faculty electronically and complete the application process. The issue of authentication in the classroom setting was also ameliorated by the cohort residential environment and the use of the Minerva platform as an active learning strategy.

While the orientation training program includes activities and information around various types of intercultural communication and issues in the context of the host country (for instance, recognizing cultural traits/patterns vs. stereotypes) there is no instruction or awareness of cultural differences in online environments or technology mediated platforms whether synchronous or asynchronous. There is an ongoing concern by the team that this may be an issue upon implementation with students from varying cultural backgrounds and societal environments and may need to be addressed in any revision of the orientation process/agenda.

As mentioned earlier, the Minerva Project’s proprietary platform is designed to enhance active learning in a flipped classroom interactive online seminar learning environment. The team learned that while the students will be working in a dual platform with the future migration to Canvas, there will be a single sign-on process. A screenshot of the student dashboard was also provided. The orientation schedule includes an overview of the Minerva platform, the student dashboard (calendar, classes, assignments and support services) as well as the required A/V setup and tools for different seminar types: peer instruction, case-based, Socratic, and directed discussion.
Finally, the members of the team participated as “students” along with some Minerva employees in a 45 minute live demonstration of active learning and small group discussion around the Minerva Pyramid of Learning Goals, Three Core Capacities (Critical Analyses, Creative Thinking, Effective Communication) and the Habits of Mind and Foundational Concepts. The platform appeared to work well and allow for interaction that would equal or exceed that of face-to-face classroom methods. The tools and messaging were complex but with appropriate training and experience, the team felt the platform would be effective.

D. Assessment and Other Academic Issues: Admissions, Assessment
(CFRs 1.6, 1.7, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.10, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7)

Prior to the visit, the team requested additional information about admissions and assessment.
1. An outline of the admissions process
2. Examples of rubrics used for assessment of student learning
3. Job description for the Admissions Director
4. Undergraduate learning outcomes (institutional/General Education) and learning outcomes specific to the Social Sciences major

The curriculum map and assessment plan for both forms of outcomes were provided, as well as rubrics for the course of study “Habits of Mind, Methods, and Fundamental Concepts of Multimodal Communication.”

Comments
During the visit, the team learned that the assessment of direct evidence of student learning is a central component of the Minerva platform, as is the use of rubrics in every learning activity. Assessment of indirect evidence, such as student and alumni surveys, is also planned.

MSKGI and Minerva Project underscored the high level of achievement anticipated in those admitted. In addition to required record of GPA, applicants will be judged based on five pieces of evidence each for the following characteristics: leadership, creativity, and initiative. TOEFL scores will be required of international students, but the interview process will provide the key evidence of English-speaking skills. The admissions process includes a written essay, as well as cognitive and personality tests. Sample questions were provided at the site visit. While the questions bore similarity to SAT questions, MSKGI and Minerva Project have endeavored to identify validated third-party tests that are not culturally bound.

The admissions tests and interviews will be recorded and archived. The prospective students will take the tests through a web application designed for them and will be interviewed via Skype. The team was provided with rubrics that will be used by interviewers. The Registrar, who will also attend to institutional research, will analyze and archive the data. This position has yet to be filled.

The Minerva platform will allow for ongoing assessment by both the faculty and the students. MSKGI plans to code seminar student and faculty performance weekly and maintain a record of the achievement of student outcomes throughout a student’s entire four years. The Faculty Coordinator will monitor and oversee faculty performance; mid-term and semester-end peer
evaluations of recorded seminars will be part of ensuring that pedagogical expectations are met. Given that the Minerva platform and the approach to assessment involves recording faculty and student responses and considerable evaluation of the recordings, the team inquired about whether MSKGI had consulted research as to the effect of recording on learning. MSKGI representatives noted that the platform was piloted at the University of Washington Medical School and a group using the platform was compared with those not using it. The learning results were positive. The representatives also noted studies indicating that people forget they are being recorded in situations of prolonged recording. Asked about their intentions to research and publish learning results, MSKGI strongly replied in the affirmative.

Overall, the visit confirmed that assessment is an integral part of the MSKGI program, a factor that is to be commended. MSKGI also is to be commended for seeking expert advice during the planning process. The team learned of discussions with national experts in active learning, peer instruction, and team-based learning, including Eric Mazur.

E. Other: Strategic Planning, Long-Range Plans (CFRs 1.1, 1.7, 3.6, 3.7, 4.6, 4.7)

Prior to the visit the team reviewed appendices within the structural change proposal including:
1. The KGI 2012-1017 Strategic Plan
2. KGI October 14, 2013 KGI Minerva Alliance Agreement

In the initial conference call, the team inquired about the strategic plan and its relationship to the proposed changes, but no additional documents were requested for the visit. Noting that the Minerva Project partnership and development of undergraduate education were not part of the 2012-2017 strategic plan, the team inquired at the visit about whether KGI had performed a formal risk analysis relating to the proposed changes.

Comments
Institutional representatives acknowledged that the current strategic plan did not anticipate these structural changes and made a convincing argument that the partnership is aligned with KGI’s goals and mission. The following points were made:

- The changes move KGI forward in the area of active learning, a clear imperative in the strategic plan.
- The expansion to undergraduate education is anticipated to increase enrollment in KGI, a goal in the current strategic plan.
- The technology that the Minerva platform will provide and the global aspects of the undergraduate experience will meet the current plans for further global initiatives and for technological innovation.
- In addition, the entire effort relates to the life sciences in that it investigates and involves research in cognition and learning.
- KGI pointed to the extensive conversations held with faculty and with its Board of Trustees before taking the step to partner with Minerva Project. They indicated that KGI faculty embraced the entrepreneurship within the proposed model.
- They acknowledged potential “reputational risk,” but stressed that the model, given the lower cost of tuition, is threatening to other institutions, and this is not a bad thing.
• The partnership will provide KGI with “the bandwidth to move forward” not just by virtue of Minerva Project’s technology, but also by virtue of the quality of the people involved.

The team asked further about the risks involved, e.g. the impact on KGI, should MSKGI separate from KGI in later years per the possible scenarios in the October 14, 2013 KGI Minerva Alliance Agreement. KGI representatives underscored their belief that the MOU with Minerva Project is structured as a “win-win.” KGI representatives stated that changes are sustainable for KGI, given that the Minerva platform will continue to be available to KGI under any circumstances.

The team commends the manner in which the partnership between KGI and Minerva Project and the development of undergraduate education at MSKGI addresses important goals set forward in KGI’s strategic plan, e.g. integrating research and education, reinforcing KGI’s infrastructure, addressing enrollment numbers, recruiting diverse, global students, as well as enhancing its reputation as an educational innovator. However, as the institution moves forward, it would be advisable to give prompt consideration to revisiting the strategic plan and considering new goals and potential challenges.

SECTION III. Findings and Recommendations

A. Findings

Overall, through the conference call and the ensuing visit, KGI presented strong evidence that it is willing and able to address WASC concerns and to meet WASC standards. Strong support for the accreditation process was voiced by KGI leadership during the visit. Since the initial talks between KGI and the Minerva Project, it was clear to the visiting team that the partners have established a very collaborative relationship but also one in which KGI takes clear responsibility for the academic program being proposed. There was also clear evidence that while much work has already been accomplished on the proposed program that there is real work still to be done in areas related to technology, logistics of international operations and other support areas. However, Minerva Project has staff working on these areas and the establishment of a pilot program for the first cohort will help identify areas that need yet further improvement. Both KGI and Minerva Project are fully engaged with assessment and the notion of continuous improvement. The Substantive Change team believes that the institution, together with its partner, have demonstrated sufficient commitment and resources to launching a successful undergraduate program.

B. Commendations

The Team commends KGI and MSKGI for the following:

1. Strong emphasis on global and multi-cultural nature of the program. The institution has been strongly proactive in placing staff (Regional Managers) on site very early in the process of program development.
2. Examining its faculty contract and adjusting it to allow for more continuity of faculty contact to students in a four-year program.
3. Using and implementing current technologies in innovative ways to provide a rich classroom experience for students even without a physical classroom.

4. Clear commitment to development and implementation of an on-going assessment system of both students and faculty. This includes having students evaluate faculty. MSKGI is also to be commended for seeking expert advice during the planning process.

5. The manner in which the partnership between KGI and Minerva Project and the development of undergraduate education at MSKGI addresses important goals set forward in KGI’s strategic plan, e.g. integrating research and education, reinforcing KGI’s infrastructure, addressing enrollment numbers, recruiting diverse, global students, as well as enhancing its reputation as an educational innovator.

C. Recommendations

1. **Student-Related Issues.** As MSKGI scales up to its ultimate enrollment level, that it carefully plans and addresses the need to scale up student services, especially in its international settings. Continue to develop the logistics of student travel including the orientation topics. Develop tracking of student travel logistics and other information in the Minerva Platform.

2. **Faculty.** Given the types of faculty from which MSKGI intends to draw its teaching faculty, that the institution carefully track turnover and be prepared to implement appropriate changes in either hiring or contracts to ensure sufficient continuity for students. Also, noting that MSKGI does not intend to fund faculty participation in discipline-based conferences, the team recommends that consideration be given to funding participation in conferences related to the scholarship of teaching and learning, especially given the stated intention to share research about learning on the Minerva platform.

3. **Technology.** Continue to work on resolving all technical issues as the start of the program nears to include full student costs and appropriate training for faculty on multicultural issues surrounding technology use. Review the design of the residential housing setting to include separate labs or designated technology enhancements in the communal spaces and meeting rooms. Consider developing arrangements with libraries in each international location to support student learning within the same time zone.

4. **Assessment.** Continue to develop the necessary rubrics to assess student learning and faculty effectiveness. Also give consideration to researching the impact of video archiving upon student learning and faculty effectiveness.

5. **Strategic Planning.** That KGI should revisit its strategic plan and specifically incorporate its thinking on the future of the undergraduate program and its relationship with Minerva Project.