July 7, 2014

Dr. Ralph Kuncl  
President  
University of Redlands  
1200 East Colton Ave, PO Box 3080  
Redlands, CA 92373-0999

Dear President Kuncl:

At its meeting June 18-20, 2014, the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) considered the report of the Accreditation Visit (AV) team that conducted the visit to the University of Redlands, February 4-7, 2014. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by the university prior to the Offsite Review (OSR), supplemental materials requested by the team following the OSR, and your response to the AV team report, dated May 15, 2014. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Ed Wingenbach, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, and David Fite, Provost. Your comments were very helpful in informing the Commission’s deliberations.

In the July 2, 2003, Commission letter after the University of Redland’s last comprehensive review, four areas were identified for attention: 1) defining learning outcomes; 2) developing quality assurance systems incorporating student learning assessment; 3) expanding institutional and strategic planning; and 4) sustaining diversity achievements. In a subsequent Special Visit (March, 2006), the Commission reiterated the need for Redlands to strengthen assessment by 1) expanding the scope of its assessment efforts; 2) linking assessment findings to core institutional processes; and 3) drawing upon national models and proven practices in assessment.

Overall, the team concluded that the University of Redlands has made significant progress in satisfying the Commission’s recommendations since the last comprehensive review and Special Visit. The university has: student learning outcomes for all its undergraduate and graduate degree programs; a comprehensive program review process; an annual planning process, though it is undergoing change; and strengths in student diversity. However, work is still needed in the area of assessment of student learning. According to the team, “Assessment is in the developmental stage and is practiced inconsistently across programs.”

The University of Redlands was part of Pilot 1 and was required to address the following four components in its institutional report, individually or in any combination: 1) meaning, quality and rigor of the degrees offered by the university; 2) student proficiencies; 3) student success; 4) sustainability: how the university will ensure its institutional capacity and educational effectiveness in the future and how the institution will respond to the changing environment for higher education. Redlands chose to combine components 1 and 2 into a single essay.
The team found the institutional report to be extensive, thorough, thoughtful, and straightforward, with “meaningful analyses that provided a candid appraisal of the institution’s strengths and weaknesses.”

With regard to the components:

**Meaning, quality and rigor of degrees/graduation proficiencies.** The team reported that Redlands articulated the “distinctive elements of a Redlands education” and successfully defined the meaning of its degrees in eight categories at the bachelors, master’s and doctoral levels, drawing upon a comprehensive set of learning outcomes that included expectations for student learning. In terms of monitoring quality and rigor of its degrees, Redlands has in place a “strong program review process” and provided evidence of how the results of program reviews are used “to alter the curriculum and pedagogical strategies to improve learning.”

**Student success.** The team commended Redlands for “its attention to retention and graduation rates and its in-depth examination of success metrics for various student populations.” Redlands has comprehensively defined, benchmarked and tracked measures of student success at the undergraduate and graduate levels and has used this information to understand the student experience. In addition, the university has studied the factors that affect student success and made changes in its programs and activities based on the results. Redlands reports a six-year graduation rate of 76% with no significant disparities by gender, race or ethnicity.

**Sustainability.** The team reviewed Redlands’ finances, planning processes, and faculty governance structure. The University of Redlands experienced “a worsened regional economic impact” from the 2008 recession. The university has taken aggressive steps to improve its financial condition, including reducing expenditures, implementing significant budget cuts, raising new revenues, and launching a fundraising campaign. The team concluded that Redlands is generating adequate cash flow to fund its expenses and that its financial measures and ratios “are showing improvement.” Redlands is tuition dependent and projects modest enrollment increases through 2015. At the time of the visit, the Redlands’ planning process was undergoing changes to become multi-year, organized around core themes, and monitored through metrics. Also at the time of the visit, the model for faculty governance was under review. The team noted the “considerable work” that has been undertaken in this area in response to Redlands’ own assessment that improvements were needed.

In addition to the commendations cited above, the team identified these additional areas for praise: Redlands’ demonstrated commitment to promoting student success for both traditional and post-traditional learners; an “elegant” general education program; faculty’s clear ownership of and active engagement with program review and educational effectiveness; and Redlands’ model of personalized education that results in strong connections between students and faculty. The Commission endorses the commendations in the team report and also wishes to acknowledge the university for its work since the visit in defining the five core competencies in CFR 2.2a and setting expected levels of student proficiency.

The Commission endorses the recommendations of the AV team and wishes to emphasize the following areas for further attention and development:
Strengthening assessment. The team noted “many hopeful signs” that the institution is moving in the right direction: “widespread” engagement by faculty in the development of a “sound” assessment framework; appropriate leadership and infrastructure for ensuring “quality learning through assessment;” and the support for assessment by central administration and administrators within the college and schools. However, the team expressed concerns about “the limited time the institution has dedicated to developing a manageable assessment approach.” The Commission expects the University of Redlands to have in place effective assessment plans that produce findings about whether students are achieving at expected levels of performance and that include a process for addressing and improving areas of concern identified through assessment. Redlands’ academic programs have learning outcomes, but according to the team, the methods of assessment and demonstrated use of assessment results for program improvement are “inconsistent and limited.” In addition, the co-curricular areas “have not yet established learning outcomes or participated in a program review process.” As the University of Redlands strengthens its assessment efforts, it will want to pay attention to: the types of data collected (direct, indirect, longitudinal and benchmarked data); how data gathered about student learning outcomes are used consistently across all departments to improve curriculum and pedagogy; the dissemination of assessment results to the campus community; and co-curricular program assessment and program review (CFRs 2.3, 2.4. 2.6, 2.11)

Creating a culture of transparency, openness and clarity. The team concurred with Redlands’ own assessment that “sharing information about student success and educational effectiveness remains an area of weakness.” The team found that dissemination of assessment results and student success data was “erratic.” The Commission expects the University of Redlands to broadly share institutional data, be transparent about using evidence in its decision-making processes; and regularly communicate with constituencies about findings and results. (CFRs 1.3, 2.4, 3.8, 4.3, 4.6)

Establishing an effective, collaborative faculty governance structure. At the time of the visit, according to the team, the current model of faculty governance was “ineffective.” The Commission expects the University of Redlands to establish an effective, collaborative governance system suited to the realities and the needs of the institution. The Commission was pleased to learn that since the visit a faculty senate has been established and began work in June 2014. (CFRs 3.8, 3.11)

Maintaining financial stability. According to the team, “While the university has balanced operating budgets and restored value to the endowment, significant financial challenges remain.” The Commission expects the university to maintain operating budget discipline, build reserves, and achieve a positive operating result. (CFR 3.5)

Evaluating the university’s mission statement. The team found the current mission statement “lengthy” and “without a tight focus or clear direction.” The university will want to evaluate its mission statement to ensure it represents a concise, powerful and coherent vision for the institution. (CFR 1.1)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:
1. Receive the Accreditation Visit team report and reaffirm the accreditation of the University of Redlands for eight years, through June 2022.


4. Request an Interim Report due November 1, 2018, on the following issues cited in the AV team report:
   a. An update on the university’s comprehensive plan for assessment: implementing co-curricular assessment and program review; incorporating indirect, longitudinal, and benchmarked data in addition to direct evidence in the assessment process; using data gathered about student learning outcomes consistently across all departments to guide improvement; sharing assessment results with the campus community.
   b. A description of the university’s progress in reducing the operating deficit and building reserves.
   c. The status of the university’s shared governance system.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that the University of Redlands has addressed the two Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness and has successfully completed the Pilot 1 review conducted under the 2008 Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review, the institution is encouraged to continue its progress, particularly with respect to student learning and success.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of the 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 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.

Please note that the Criteria for Review (CFR) cited in this letter refer to the 2008 Handbook of Accreditation. The 2008 Handbook continues to be available on the WSCUC website at www.wascsenior.org. As the institution works on the issues cited in this letter, it should be mindful of the expectations that it will need to meet at the time of its next comprehensive review, which will take place under the revised Standards of Accreditation and institutional review process in the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation. The University of Redlands is encouraged to familiarize itself with the 2013 Handbook.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that the university undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WSCUC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while assuring public accountability, and we are
accreditation process that adds value to institutions while assuring public accountability, and we are grateful for your continued support of our 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: Harold Hewitt, Jr., Commission Chair
    Ed Wingenbach, ALO
    Carole Beswick, Board Chair
    Barbara Gross Davis, WSCUC Staff Liaison