July 15, 2015

Dr. Ben Sanders
Executive Director
Reach Institute for School Leadership
1221 Preservation Park Way, Suite 100
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Executive Director Sanders:

At its meeting June 17-20, 2015, the Commission considered the report of the Seeking Accreditation Visit team that conducted an Onsite Review of the Reach Institute for School Leadership (RISL, or Reach) March 18-20, 2015. Commission members also reviewed the Seeking Accreditation Visit report submitted by the institution prior to the visit and the May 21, 2015, response from the institution. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Peggy Dove, Accreditation Liaison Officer; Jonna Justiniano, Associate Director; Carolyn James, Board President; Jessica Evans, Program Coordinator; and Victoria Folks, Program Coordinator. 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 Eligibility Review Committee as communicated in its letter. These issues are as follows:

1. **Achieve approval by Bureau for Private Post-Secondary Education (BPPE) by the time of Initial Accreditation:** This remains in process at this time due to backlogs at BPPE. This will need to be completed by the time the Commission takes action to award Initial Accreditation.

2. **Appoint an independent chair of the board who is not an employee or professor at REACH (CFR 1.5; WSCUC Independent Governing Board Policy):** This is completed.

3. **Implement all elements of the WSCUC Independent Governing Board Policy (CFR 1.5; WSCUC Independent Governing Board Policy):** This is completed.

4. **Separate the role of chief executive officer and chief academic officer (CFR 3.8):** The intent of the ERC’s concerns has been addressed appropriately.
5. Increase information and learning resources through expansion of access to more online learning resources and other local university libraries (CFR 3.5): This has been achieved.

6. Maintain a focus on finding balanced financial resources to ensure financial sustainability (CFR 3.4): This is in the process of being accomplished. The institution is operating without deficits.

7. Continue to develop and utilize more robust data collection (CFR 4.1): This is partially fulfilled in terms of data on learning outcomes and program effectiveness, though institution-level data analysis remains to be developed.

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 the WSCUC 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 minimal level.

The Commission commends the institution’s achievements under this Standard for clearly articulating its mission and vision to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and leadership in partner schools and for demonstrating promising outcomes. It is clear that faculty and administrators embrace the Reach values and are adept at integrating them into its educational activities. The team also affirms the ample opportunities afforded to the faculty to reflect on and shape the curriculum.

The institution is expected in a subsequent review to demonstrate continued development of learning outcomes through their more complete mapping across the programs. Continued clarity for the role of the chief academic officer as an educational leader, as distinct from administrative roles, is also expected. (CFRs 1.2, 1.4, 1.7, 1.8)

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions

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

The Commission commends the Reach’s achievements under this Standard for designing a rigorous and effective educational experience and for recruiting experienced and committed faculty for its delivery. The pedagogical model of individual on-site coaching is both effective and adaptive to the work context of the Reach students. During their interviews with students, team members heard enthusiastic endorsements of the power and relevance of Reach’s educational model.

The institution is expected in a subsequent review to give specific attention to further development of its policies related to institutional research (in terms of the IRB), which should also be made publicly available; to the publication and assessment at the
individual outcome level of Program Learning Outcomes; to credit hour designations; and to the research design of the required capstone project. The current program review protocol should be expanded to include an external reviewer and input from employers and alumni. (CFRs 2.1, 2.2b, 2.3, 2.6-2.10, 2.13, 2.14)

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 minimal level.

The Commission commends the institution’s achievements under this Standard for diversifying its revenue sources, obtaining successive clean audits, operating with annual surpluses, securing additional grant and foundation funds, and for managing a stable budget. The institution is also commended for expanding its board and bringing it further into compliance with WSCUC expectations; the team affirmed the board’s evident effectiveness.

The institution is expected in a subsequent review to give specific attention to the development of its faculty who, while clearly experienced and committed, will benefit from an enhanced emphasis on conducting their own research. The development of a graduate culture appropriate to the degrees being offered implies continuing Reach’s quest for additional faculty with earned doctorates. (CFRs 3.1-3.10)

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 minimal level.

As noted in the team’s report, “With regard to student learning assessment, the institution presents an array of methods, both formative and summative, for assessment of student learning effectiveness processes. Quality assurance processes are comprehensive at the course and program levels.” The Commission commends this deployment of a robust quality assurance culture for its academic programs. At the same time, however, it notes and concurs with the team’s recommendation for Reach “to use data for...a more discrete level of performance level assessments for the degree programs.”

The institution is expected in a subsequent review to give specific attention to expanding its quality assurance processes to include the non-academic components of Reach’s operations, including aspects such as student services, technology, and administrative effectiveness. Expanding the institutional research function is foundational to this development. (CFR 4.1 – 4.7)
In view of the above, the Commission acted to:

Receive the Seeking Accreditation Visit Report and

1. Grant Candidacy for a period of up to five years
2. Schedule a subsequent Seeking Accreditation Visit in fall 2017 to address the areas identified under the above Standards as not yet having been met at a substantial level.

In taking this action to grant Candidacy, the Commission confirms that the Reach Institute for School Leadership has met the WSCUC Standards at least at a minimal level.

Institutions granted the status of Candidate for Accreditation must use the following statement if they wish to describe that status publicly:

“The Reach Institute for School Leadership has been recognized as a Candidate for Accreditation by WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), 985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100, Alameda, CA 94501, 510.748.9001. This status is a preliminary affiliation with the Commission awarded for a maximum period of five years. Candidacy is an indication that the institution is progressing toward Accreditation. Candidacy is not Accreditation and does not ensure eventual Accreditation.”

Federal law requires that the WSCUC address and phone number appear in your catalog.

Institutions granted Candidacy are required to:

1. Submit an Annual Report in the format required by the Commission

2. Keep the Commission informed of any significant changes or developments, especially those that require prior approval according to the Commission’s Substantive Change Policy. The Reach Institute for School Leadership is approved to offer only the following degrees at its current location:

   Master in Education in Teaching
   Masters in Education in Instructional Leadership

   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.

3. Pay Annual Membership Dues prorated from the date of this action. An Annual Dues statement will be sent under separate cover.
In keeping with WSCUC review protocols, the required subsequent review and visit for Seeking Accreditation will focus only on those issues identified under each Standard (above) deemed to require additional development. (Please also reference the team report for additional context for the Commission’s findings.)

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of the Reach Institute for School Leadership 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 Reach 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 the Reach Institute for School Leadership 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/rw

Cc: William Ladusaw, Commission Chair
Peggy Dove, ALO
Carolyn James, Board Chair
Members of the Seeking Accreditation team
Richard Osborn, Vice President