July 10, 2013

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 19-21, 2013, the Commission considered the report of the Special Visit team that conducted a review of UC Hastings College of the Law (Hastings) March 5 – 6, 2013. The Commission also reviewed the Special Visit report submitted by Hastings prior to the visit and the institution’s May 21, 2013 response to the visiting team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you, Jenni Parrish, Associate Dean for Library Services and Education Effectiveness and the Accreditation Liaison Officer, and Andrea Welles, Assessment and Institutional Research (AIR) Analyst. Your observations were very helpful in informing the commission’s deliberations.

In June 2012, the Commission found that UC Hastings had demonstrated that it was in substantial compliance with Commission Standards and granted Hastings Initial Accreditation. The Commission requested a Special Visit during spring 2013 to further address three issues. Hastings was expected, first, to show development in the assessment of student learning, including program learning outcomes, assessment plans for all programs, and results from the implementation of those plans. Second, Hastings was expected to develop a formal program review process that extended to all its academic programs and complete reviews of all programs by the time of the visit, with special attention to new programs. Finally, UC Hastings needed to monitor its strategic plan carefully to identify when financial adjustments were warranted, and understand the impact of its plan on student diversity and student success. To support planning, Hastings was expected to show progress in building a more robust institutional research function and developing an information technology plan.

Hastings addressed these issues in a thorough manner and produced a report that included evidence of genuine progress. The Commission commended Hastings in the following areas:

**Educational Effectiveness.** The team report reflected the College’s commitment to enhance educational effectiveness. As noted by the team, “the evidence included in the institutional report’s appendix and additional materials prepared by the Associate Dean from her participation in the WASC Assessment
Leadership Academy (ALA) demonstrate that Hastings strives to be at the cutting edge of American law schools incorporating outcomes-based assessment.”

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).** The team report noted that there has been widespread adoption of student learning outcomes in courses throughout Hastings. The Commission commended Hastings faculty and academic leadership for their ongoing work to develop and refine student learning outcomes and to employ innovative assessment strategies in individual courses. These efforts were extended to adjunct faculty training, providing the tools they need to incorporate SLOs in their courses.

**Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs).** As highlighted in the team report, Hastings continues to refine its program learning outcomes for the JD program. In addition, Hastings has adopted distinctive PLOs for the Masters of Studies in Law (MSL) and Masters in Law (LLM) programs, committing itself to multi-faceted program evaluation plans for the masters programs.

**Strategic Planning.** Hastings has been monitoring key financial assumptions and making effective adjustments in response to the changing environment for legal education. The institution has also engaged in significant planning to meet information technology needs, and has enhanced its capacity for institutional research. The Commission urges Hastings to “remain vigilant in its efforts to analyze and act upon changes in the current volatile climate affecting legal education,” particularly to maintain its commitments to student diversity and financial stability.

The Commission endorsed the findings and recommendations of the Special Visit team and emphasized the following areas for further attention and development:

**Assessment Planning and Implementation.** As highlighted in the team report, Hastings has begun to link student learning outcomes to course assessment practices. The team reported: “the harder task will be continuing the progress toward integration of effective assessment practices geared to stated learning outcomes throughout the curriculum. It is likely that such progress will depend on concerted efforts by all concerned over a number of years.” The next step will be to use embedded assessment methods to assess both course-level and program-level learning outcomes. While selecting one program learning outcome for concerted review each year in the JD program would reflect sustained progress, the Commission encouraged Hastings to develop and implement an institution-wide assessment plan that will focus on all program- and institution-level outcomes. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 4.6, 4.7)

**Program Review.** UC Hastings is expected to have clearly stated program learning outcomes and engage all its programs in systematic program review. While Hastings has made significant progress with its master’s programs, the team found that Hastings is struggling to put a comprehensive review process in place for its JD program. The Commission is encouraged by the faculty’s initiatives to learn how best to frame and implement program reviews. At the same time, this has been an issue raised by the Commission over the past two years. Hastings needs to move beyond small-scale efforts and develop a program review plan by the time of its progress
report in spring 2015. Implementation of the plan including changes and improvements resulting from program reviews should be available at the time of the Accreditation Visit in spring 2017. (CFRs 2.3, 2.7, 4.4)

The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Special Visit report.


3. Request a progress report due spring 2015, reviewed by WASC staff, to evaluate progress on the following:
   
   a. Development of a comprehensive assessment plan for all programs and implementation of at least some part of those plans for every program.
   
   b. Results from program reviews of the master's programs implemented between now and fall 2014, and how these results have been used to inform improvement.
   
   c. Development of a program review plan for the JD program.

4. Request that results from a JD program review, and how these results have been used to inform improvement, be available by the time of the spring 2017 accreditation visit.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to UC President and the chair of the UC Board of Regents 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 them. The team report and the Commission's action letter will also be posted on the WASC website. If the institution wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WASC will post a link to that response.


As UC Hastings College of the Law works on the issues cited above, 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. These expectations build on past practice and will include, for example, student success, quality improvement processes such as assessment and program review, planning, and financial sustainability. However, the 2013 Handbook also includes new foci: the meaning, quality, and integrity of degrees; and more visionary institutional planning for
the “new ecology” of learning. The institution will be well served to familiarize itself with the 2013 Handbook and to approach its challenges in ways that will address both previous and current expectations.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that the UC Hastings College of the Law 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/gc

Cc: Harold Hewitt, Commission Chair
    Jenni Parrish, ALO
    Ms. Marci Dragun, Board Chair
    Mark Yudof, President, University of California
    American Bar Association
    Members of the Special Visit team
    Maureen A. Maloney, WASC Staff Liaison