July 10, 2013

Yoram Neumann
CEO
Touro University Worldwide
10601 Calle Lee, Suite 179
Los Alamitos, CA 90720

Dear CEO Neumann,

At its meeting June 19 – 21, 2013, the Commission considered the report of the Special Visit team that conducted an on-site review of Touro University Worldwide (TUW) March 18 – 20, 2013. The Commission also reviewed the Special Visit report submitted by the University prior to the visit. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and Edith Neumann, Provost and Chief Academic Officer. Your observations were very helpful in informing the commission’s deliberations.

Scope of Review. In its Action Letter of June 25, 2010, in response to the March, 2010 EER Team Report, the Commission identified five areas of concern:

1. **Organizational Structure.** Both the structural and operational relationships between Touro College Los Angeles (TCLA) and its recently created online division were undefined; in addition, the naming of the two entities was confusing.

2. **Sustainability and Local Autonomy.** TCLA continued to run deficits which were covered by the California-based not-for-profit Touro College, raising questions of TCLA’s long-term viability. Additionally, a significant level of outside control continued to be exercised over the institution by the system office in New York.

3. **Policies and Procedures.** TCLA and its online division lacked academic policies for course and program development, specific procedures for student and staff grievances, and a robust faculty handbook identifying the role of the faculty in overseeing the curriculum.

4. **Assessment and Program Review.** A culture of evidence was found to be weak; assessment processes to generate evidence were in need of substantial development.

5. **Strategic Planning.** The institution lacked an overarching strategic plan.

The Commission requested the Special Visit to focus on these five areas, as well as to review the Master’s Degree in Media and Communications and any other new online programs.
The Commission commends Touro University Worldwide for the broad and specific steps it has taken to address the issues which led to the Special Visit. Significant progress has been made in each of the areas under review, and a foundation for further progress has been carefully laid. The Commission noted that most of this progress was made in a short time after a change in leadership and before the Special Visit, and commended the leadership for its rapid response to the issues facing the institution.

The Commission endorsed the commendations and recommendations of the Special Visit team. At the same time, it wished to emphasize the need to maintain the progress made on the five identified issues and the development of further online programs, as noted on pp. 7 – 19 of the team report. In particular, it notes the following:

**Organizational Structure.** The Special Visit team found that, in the period between the 2010 EER action letter and the 2013 Special Visit, the institution has taken significant steps to clarify its organizational structure. TCLA is now known as Touro University Worldwide (TUW), the administrative headquarters is housed in the facility which directs the online programs, and the top leadership has been assumed by individuals with experience supporting the educational modalities of the organization. As highlighted in the report, “The new leadership team has made numerous changes to the structure, personnel, policies, and procedures at the University….Previous concerns about outside control over the administrative and financial operations are no longer an issue.” In particular, the new leadership team has rapidly developed necessary handbooks, identified and mapped learning outcomes, and initiated program reviews. The Commission encouraged the leadership to continue to develop its team to provide depth for the administration of the institution. (CFRs 3.6, 3.7, 3.9)

**Sustainability and Local Autonomy.** As cited in the team’s report, “…concerns about [the Touro System’s] ongoing financial underwriting of TUW’s operating deficits were allayed.” The team found that “The Board is committed to fully supporting TUW’s institutional autonomy…” and the Commission acknowledges that “The Touro College and University System (TCUS) Board of Trustees’ leadership has expressed complete faith in the ability of the CEO to turn around TUW operations.” The Commission expects that the institution will continue to make progress toward running balanced operations, and encourages the leadership to expand participation in the generation of annual budgets. (CFR 3.8)

**Policies and Procedures.** “…the Special Visit team found that the [institution] has Faculty, Staff, and Student Handbooks that included the necessary policies regarding new courses and programs and grievances.” This accomplishment has been achieved in a remarkably short period of time. However, the Commission noted that the degree to which teaching faculty exercise control over the curriculum remains unclear. (CFR 3.10)

**Assessment and Program Review.** As the team report highlighted, “Since taking charge in July, 2012, TUW’s new executive team has moved quickly to put in place appropriate assessment policies and instruments, including program review.” The standardized pedagogy for online courses, with consistent assignments and instruments for measuring student success, and the
definition of institutional learning outcomes linked to program learning outcomes and curriculum maps are examples of the successful processes that have been implemented. While further work remains to be done to ensure continued development and consistency of these practices of assessment and program review, the Commission recognizes the foundation that has been put in place, and anticipates a fuller report on the particular activity of program review. (CFRs 1.2, 2.3, 2.7, 4.6, 4.7)

**Strategic Planning.** The institution’s new leadership responded swiftly to the need for an institutional strategic plan, resulting as well in the creation of the four-year master plan. As cited in the team report, “The Master Plan aligns the strategic planning goals with the institutional planning functions as called for by WASC.” The Commission notes that most of the issues previously raised in Commission actions have been addressed by these efforts, and it commends the institution for its focus on goals and actions to build a culture of assessment through these activities. However, the Commission also notes that these efforts are in their early stages and will require persistence to be realized in full. The plans for increased enrollment are crucial for financial sustainability. The institution is encouraged to pay close attention to the deadlines and metrics contained in the master planning documents. (CFRs 4.2, 4.2, 4.2, 4.6)

**Online Programs.** As highlighted in the team’s report, “The TUW online division has dramatically increased its capacity to ensure high quality programs and student success.” For example, all parties responsible for faculty hiring have participated in raising the standards for faculty credentials, all Master’s programs have been through a program review in the last eight months, and grading rubrics have been implemented for all learning outcomes. The resources and leadership to deploy this capacity have likewise been affirmed. The Commission anticipates that the institution will continue to deploy these resources in advance of the next WASC review. The Commission also noted that the expanded role of adjunct faculty will require new and careful processes to ensure their integration into the TUW culture. (CFRs 2.10, 2.12, 2.13, 4.4, 4.5)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Special Visit team report.

2. Request an additional Special Visit in spring 2015 to review progress on the issues cited in this letter and the Special Visit team report. In particular, the institution should address the following specific items in its report:

   a. Enrollments (both online and onsite) for the period Spring 2013 through Fall 2014, with as much relevant detail as necessary to explain the enrollments in comparison to the projections contained in the strategic plan. If there are significant shortfalls from the projections, include an explanation as to what efforts have been/will be taken to address the shortfalls.
b. Financial performance for the years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, including detail of any special events which resulted in unexpected increases in revenues or expenditures.

c. Discussion of the budget process, as it may have been amended, to be more inclusive of stakeholders.

d. Discussion of the curriculum development process, under the recently established policies and procedures, and faculty control over the process; to what extent do the faculty have ownership?

e. Actions taken by the institution to clarify the role of adjunct faculty in the development of the curriculum.

f. Evidence that student learning outcomes are at an appropriately high level of expectation, and to the extent available, evidence as to whether students achieve that level of expectation.

g. Discussion of 50% of the program reviews which will have taken place in the period between this letter and the submission of the spring 2015 Special Visit report: what conclusions have been drawn? What actions have been taken? What plans have been made or changed?

h. A review (compare and contrast as appropriate) of the Strategic Plan and the Master Plan, on its key elements and degree of success in reaching their respective goals – or, if amended, the success in reaching different goals. Please include discussion of the extent to which external groups or students have participated in the further refinement of these plans, and how the results of that participation are reflected in modified plans.

i. An analysis of findings and improvements resulting from implementation of the comprehensive array of planned assessments and program reviews as described to the Special Visit team.

You are encouraged to consult with your WASC liaison in the preparation of the report.


In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of Touro University Worldwide’s 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 them. The team report and the Commission’s action letter will also be posted on the WASC website. If TUW wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WASC will post a link to that response.

As Touro University Worldwide 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; student performance in core competencies at the time of graduation; and more visionary institutional planning for the “new ecology” of learning. Touro University Worldwide will be well-served to familiarize itself with the 2013 Handbook and to approach its challenges in ways that will address both previous and new expectations.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the work that TUW undertook in preparing for and supporting this Special Visit. 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
    Edith Neumann, ALO
    Mark Hasten, Board Chair
    Members of the Special Visit team
    Christopher Oberg, WASC Staff Liaison