July 10, 2013

Jerry D. Campbell
President
Claremont Lincoln University
1325 North College Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711

Dear President Campbell:

At its meeting June 19-21, 2013, the Commission considered the report of the team that conducted the visit to Claremont Lincoln University (ClaiLiU) January 28-30, 2013, as part of ClaiLiU’s efforts to seek WASC Senior College and University Commission (SCUC) accreditation. The Commission also reviewed the university’s report and exhibits, its response to the visiting team’s report dated June 1, 2013, and the August 8, 2011, letter that followed the Eligibility Review Committee panel’s decision to grant Eligibility. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with Philip Clayton, Lynn O’Leary Archer, Ganwand Quan, and Laura Burgiss. The updates, information, and observations that were provided about ClaiLiU’s plans were very helpful in the Commission’s deliberations.

In August 2011, the Eligibility Review Committee (ERC) found that ClaiLiU met all 23 eligibility criteria and granted Eligibility. At the same time, the ERC noted that several areas would need to be addressed. The criteria that were cited related to authority, governing board, a fulltime CEO, student services, financial accountability, and institutional planning. In January 2013, the visiting team evaluated ClaiLiU’s progress in these areas and the university’s performance in light of the WASC Standards. The team concluded that ClaiLiU had addressed most of these concerns in a proactive manner, with some work remaining. One major area still to be resolved is approval by the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education, which is a requirement for Initial Accreditation as cited in the ERC letter. As reflected below, during the visit other issues arose leading to the Commission decision cited in this letter.

In finding ClaiLiU eligible to apply for accreditation, the Eligibility Review Committee authorized ClaiLiU to pursue accreditation through a review known as Pathway B. Pathway B allows institutions that already have regional accreditation to achieve Initial Accreditation with a single visit, rather than the four visits normally required for WASC accreditation. As an institution growing out of Claremont School of Theology, which is already accredited by WASC, ClaiLiU was determined by Commission staff to be eligible for Pathway B. ClaiLiU is an interreligious faith graduate university being developed with the leadership of
CST and includes CST; the Academy of Jewish Religion, which recently achieved WASC accreditation; and Banyan Claremont, a Muslim graduate school now being created by the Islamic Center of Los Angeles and which plans for WASC accreditation in the future. In keeping with the policy for Pathway B reviews, ClaLiU took a comprehensive approach to the review, focusing on the four Standards of Accreditation. The team found ClaLiU’s report “clearly written and candid in its acknowledgement of issues which CLU must address in achieving its mission and commitments to institutional capacity and educational effectiveness.”

As reflected below, the Commission found that ClaLiU did not meet the criteria established for initial accreditation of “substantial compliance” with all of the accreditation Standards. The Commission therefore acted to grant the institution Candidacy for Accreditation and identified those issues that will need to be addressed for initial accreditation. As a new institution, ClaLiU will need to demonstrate a longer track record of performance through the Candidacy period.

The Visiting team found that much had been achieved in ClaLiU’s first year of operation. Significant areas for commendation include the following:

**A Bold Vision.** The Commission commends the Board, administration, faculty, and staff for creating a vision described by the visiting team as “clear, compelling, and bold.” Backed by a generous donation from the Lincoln family, ClaLiU is creating a new vision for how seminary education can take place in a time of dwindling enrollments around the country. The team described the enthusiasm and commitment to this new vision both on campus and by all of the partner institutions as “palpable and robust.” This vision has also generated enthusiastic support far beyond ClaLiU. Students are also attracted to this vision which transcends their own faith perspectives.

**A Strong Foundation.** Growing out of intensive conversation and community building among all of the partners, the ClaLiU vision has already resulted in concrete plans and implementation, with majors focused on interfaith perspectives backed up by well qualified faculty, adequate staffing, student learning outcomes, assessment plans, and an appropriate infrastructure. The Commission also commends Claremont School of Theology for providing the initial core administration, faculty, programs, and facilities which has enabled progress beyond what might be anticipated for a new university.

Notwithstanding the progress made, both the team and the Commission noted that the institution was only a few months old, and had not established the track record or history of operations and educational effectiveness needed for Initial Accreditation. In receiving the team report, the Commission endorsed the findings in the team report, including its many suggestions and recommendations, and urges ClaLiU to consider them carefully. In addition, the Commission wishes to emphasize the following areas for special attention:

**Financial Stability.** The Commission concurs with the team’s concerns about the financial sustainability of ClaLiU. The $50 million gift from the Lincoln family is an impressive demonstration of commitment to the vision of an interfaith university. As ClaLiU recognizes in its own planning, this gift will need to be backed up by a strong enrollment, projected to rise from the current 60 students to 230 by 2015; however, sustained enrollment growth will depend,
in part, on defining more precisely the job market for graduates. Major success in fundraising beyond the Lincoln gift will also be required. According to budgets provided to the team, an average of $7.6 million will need to be raised each year over the next three years, which represents an average of 78% of revenue from donations. As the team noted in its report, “little evidence exists of the sustainability of the organization” beyond increased applications and a single donation. The Commission agrees with the team that “while great effort has been expended in building a new, exciting organization, sustainability remains in question pending actual, sustained enrollment and fundraising successes.”

ClaLiU will also need to develop a more comprehensive business plan, including cost and revenue allocations among the partner institutions. Because ClaLiU is relying on the excess capacity of CST, it will be essential to maintain the financial stability of CST during this time of transition. While CST’s finances have improved over the last few years, they are still fragile. Part of the Lincoln gift has been given to CST to stabilize its financial operations while ClaLiU is established, but CST must remain a viable operation in its own right. (CFRs 3.5, 4.2)

**Board of Trustees.** The current Board includes seven trustees, with each of the original three partner institutions having two members. Questions might be raised about how independent this board can be when six of the members also have allegiance to the partner institution. While this may have been necessary at the beginning, now that ClaLiU is fully operational, the Board should be expanded so that a majority of the Board will be noninterested members not coming from the partner institutions by the time of initial accreditation. Such a Board will be able to make decisions in line with the requirements of the WASC “Independent Governing Board Policy.” The Commission recommends that ClaLiU study this policy with care, in order for the Board to carry out its fiduciary responsibilities and other duties more effectively and so that the recommended number of Board committees can be put into operation with adequate membership on each committee to avoid too much membership overlap between the committees. In addition, each committee will need to have a majority of non-interested members. (CFR 3.9)

**Educational Effectiveness.** ClaLiU has many elements of a strong educational effectiveness program in place for such a young institution but more remains to be done. A major accomplishment has been the development of shared institutional learning outcomes that are integrated into the program learning outcomes in all programs. Yet to be done is a full alignment of these outcomes into all course outcomes. With faculty coming from different faith traditions and universities, many of them part-time or shared with the partner institutions, professional workshops will be needed to ensure adequate training in the unique assessment approaches that are involved in such education, so that more coherence is achieved across ClaLiU’s curriculum. The next visiting team will want to see documentation of how the assessment process is actually working, with evidence of learning, analysis of learning, and changes that have been made based on assessment results. The Annual Program Review process seems to be strong but still in the implementation stage. The next visiting team will want to see evidence of how this process is actually working with confirmation of assessment and changes that have been made taking into account assessment results. Because ClaLiU was just initiating its first online program at the time of the visit, the next visiting team will want to observe how students are being involved in active learning in this mode of delivery and what ClaLiU has learned in its evaluation of the program. As part of the next review, ClaLiU is advised to use the WASC Educational
Effectiveness Framework rubric to determine areas of needed growth as the institution matures. (CFRs 1.2, 2.3, 2.6, 2.7, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8)

**Data Management.** The Commission supports the team’s concern that no centralized data management system or plan for data collection is in place. Much of the data shared with the team came from CST rather than ClaLiU as a separate institution. Using data in decision-making and in assessment of ClaLiU’s effectiveness will be essential as the institution matures. Given the size of ClaLiU, a fulltime institutional research position may not be warranted, but a plan needs to be developed for a cohesive data management system. (CFRs 2.10, 4.3, 4.4)

In summary, ClaLiU has made good progress as a new institution but needs more time to demonstrate its capacity and educational effectiveness, as highlighted in the team report and this letter.

The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the visiting team report.

2. Grant Candidacy to Claremont Lincoln University for four years, through fall 2017.

3. Schedule a single focused review combining the capacity and educational effectiveness components for Initial Accreditation to take place in consultation with WASC staff. The visit should be scheduled soon enough to enable Claremont Lincoln to achieve initial accreditation within four years, taking into consideration the possibility that more than one visit may be needed. The processes used for the remaining visit(s) are drawn from the *How to Become Accredited* Manual rather than the new Institutional Review Process described in the 2013 *Handbook of Accreditation*. However, the revised Standards and Criteria for Review which will go into effect on July 1, 2013, will be applied to subsequent Claremont Lincoln University visits leading to initial accreditation.

4. Request that the institution incorporate its response to the issues raised in this letter and to the major recommendations of the team report into its next self-study report with an emphasis on educational effectiveness. This analysis may be included in an appendix to the institutional report or incorporated into the report.

The date of the next visit will be set to ensure that sufficient time has elapsed to enable ClaLiU to gather and evaluate evidence in response to the issues raised in this letter and the team report. The Commission understands that during the period of Candidacy, arrangements may be made to continue to operate in affiliation with Claremont School of Theology to provide students with access to an accredited degree. At the same time, ClaLiU will need to make sufficient progress toward operational independence. Now that Candidacy has been granted, the Commission requests that a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) be prepared outlining in specific details the understandings among the partner institutions including provisions for how new partners will be added. This MOU should include detailed plans on the arrangements between the partner institutions and Claremont Lincoln including shared services, faculty appointments from partner institutions, facility usage, library resources, intellectual property understandings,
budget, arrangements for tuition sharing between partner institutions and Claremont Lincoln, and commitment to follow all WASC Senior College and University Commission policies. The MOU should demonstrate sufficient operational independence for Claremont Lincoln while recognizing the need for close cooperation between the partners to ensure sustainability. In taking this action to grant Candidacy, the Commission confirms that Claremont Lincoln University has met the WASC Standards at least at a minimal level and has a plan to meet the Standards at a substantial level at the time of the next visit.

Institutions granted the status of Candidate for Accreditation must use the statement in the How to Become Accredited manual if they wish to describe that status publicly.

“Claremont Lincoln University has been recognized as a Candidate for Accreditation by the WASC Senior College and University Commission, 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 four 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 WASC 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. Claremont Lincoln University is approved to offer the following degrees at its current location: Master of Arts in Interreligious Studies, Master of Arts in Religious Leadership in Muslim Leadership, Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary/Comparative Studies, Master of Arts in Ethical Leadership, and Doctor of Philosophy in Religion. In order for these programs to be accredited, they are being offered under the authority of Claremont School of Theology until such time as ClaLiU achieves initial accreditation. Both CST and ClaLiU will need to consult the Substantive Change Manual and confer with your WASC liaison about any proposed new degree programs, and/or changes in governance or ownership to determine how these proposed changes should be approved by WASC. As new partners are considered, WASC staff should be consulted in advance to determine if approval by the Substantive Change Committee will be required. Because some of the partners are not yet accredited by WASC, Claremont Lincoln will need to ensure that the WASC policy on “Contracts with Unaccredited Organizations” is fully implemented, especially in regard to classes offered as part of Claremont Lincoln degrees from unaccredited entities. Students receiving degrees from the unaccredited entity will need to know that degrees obtained from the unaccredited entity do not come under the umbrella of Claremont Lincoln as accredited degrees until such time as the unaccredited entity receives initial accreditation.

3. Pay Annual Membership Dues calculated on the institution’s FTE and prorated from the date of this action. An Annual Dues statement will be sent under separate cover.
In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent in one week to the chairs of the governing boards of Claremont School of Theology, and the Academy of Jewish Religion, Banyan Claremont. 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 this action letter will be posted on WASC's website. If the institution wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WASC will post a link to that response.


As the university works on the issues cited above, it should be mindful of the expectations that it will eventually need to meet, as described 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 graduate-level competencies at the time of graduation; and more visionary institutional planning for the “new ecology” of learning. ClaLiU will be well served to familiarize itself with the 2013 Handbook and to approach its challenges in ways that will address both old and new expectations.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work ClaLiU 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
    John Dickason, ALO
    David Lincoln, Board Chair
    Members of the Pathway B Team
    Richard Osborn, WASC Staff Liaison