July 15, 2015

Dr. Brian Kelly
President
Life Chiropractic College West
25001 Industrial Boulevard
Hayward, CA 94545

Dear President Kelly:

At its meeting June 17-19, 2015, the Commission considered the report of the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 (SAV) team that conducted an Onsite Review of Life Chiropractic College West (LCCW) March 9-12, 2015. Commission members also reviewed the Seeking Accreditation Visit report submitted by the institution prior to the visit and its May 15, 2015, response to the team report, which included many updates on what has taken place since the team visited campus. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues, Scott Donaldson, Vice President of Academic Affairs; Kristen Gates, Director; and Ramona Houston, President, Faculty Senate. 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 any issues identified for attention by the Eligibility Review Committee as communicated in its letter. The team determined that the institution had responded appropriately by continuing to develop the board in recommended areas, by improving the measurement of student learning outcomes (although further work is needed in assessment and institutional research), by reorganizing students into an overall student services organization, by continuing to improve information systems and educational technology, and by placing a greater emphasis on information literacy. LCCW relies on its programmatic accreditor for program review but needs to develop its own complementary plan, which will be addressed later in this letter. Overall the college made a serious attempt to address the six concerns of the Eligibility Review Committee panel.

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.

The Commission commends the institution for its achievements under this Standard, in particular, for its clearly stated mission, its well-presented curriculum, its completion rates, and its low cohort default rate of 1.9%.

While the Commission found the institution to be in substantial compliance with this Standard, it also requested, related to its emphasis on continuous improvement, that Criterion for Review (CFR) 1.4, which stresses the importance of diversity be addressed in the next institutional report as part of the institution’s self-study process. The team found that LCCW largely focused on diversity as found in representation of gender and ethnic groups but needs an added emphasis on the importance of creating greater understanding of diversity and understanding within the community through such means as the development of co-curricular activities focused on cultural acceptance.

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions

The Commission has determined that the institution has met this Standard.

The Commission commends the institution for its achievements under this Standard, in particular for its development and assessment of student learning outcomes, the active engagement of students in effective lab and clinical practices, the hiring of a Director of Research to oversee greater development of a graduate culture, the wide variety of student life and co-curricular activities aligned with the institution’s mission, and the extensive support of students through many activities.

While the Commission found the institution to be in substantial compliance with this Standard, it also requested, related to its emphasis on continuous improvement, that the following CFRs be addressed in the next SAV and supports the team’s recommendations as written in the report.

CFR 2.3 – There is a need to improve course learning outcomes to ensure that they are all measurable and to integrate program learning outcomes throughout the curricula as evidenced in all course syllabi.

CFR 2.8 – To advance chiropractic care, it is necessary to further develop the resources and mentoring of faculty and student scholarship and research.

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.
The Commission commends the institution for its achievements under this Standard, in particular for its well-qualified faculty and well-established Faculty Senate, its strong financial management, and widely understood budget process; targeted capital investments focused on improving software systems, library resources, and information technology resources, and its systematic planning processes.

The Commission was concerned to hear about the very high turnover of administrators, faculty, and staff in the last four years (CFR 3.1). Much of this turnover was the result of the administration’s attempting to bring the college into the 21st century, which resulted in the loss of well over 50% of all employees for various reasons, as noted in the team report. The Commission understands the need for change, however the high percentage of turnover, while creating opportunities to build a college for the future, raises concerns about building a new campus spirit and unity. For the next SAV, LCCW should also focus attention in its report on how these changes are impacting the college.

Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

The Commission has determined that the institution has met this Standard with minimal compliance.

The Commission recognizes the positive work toward meeting this Standard as demonstrated through the multiple areas in which LCCW undertakes inquiry into institutional improvement, viz., through the involvement of stakeholders in the assessment and alignment of educational programs, through a strong strategic planning process, and through its focus on anticipating the changing higher education environment as evidenced by its desire to achieveWSCUC accreditation.

The institution is expected at the next SAV to give specific attention to the areas specified in the following CFRs. The Commission supports the team’s recommendations for each one as stated in the team report:

CFR 4.1, 4.2 – While there is a commitment to student and institutional learning and improvement, there is a need to increase the systematic process of data-driven decision-making. Establishing an institutional research office is heading in the right direction, but additional review of institutional research functions to provide timely and reliable data is needed.

CFR 4.3 – There are many data sources of assessment information, but development of well-established policies for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting information is needed for the purpose of creating a stronger culture of evidence and improvement.

In view of the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Seeking Accreditation Visit Report
2. Grant Candidacy for five years, until July 1, 2020, by which time Initial Accreditation will need to be achieved.

3. Schedule a Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 in spring 2016 focused on Standard 4, with which the institution was found to be in minimal compliance, and other areas of needed improvement related to the other Standards as outlined in this letter. If changes take place that could jeopardize the institution’s continued compliance with a Standard, the institution’s WSCUC staff liaison should be kept informed to determine if any further areas should be part of the SAV2 visit.

In taking this action to grant Candidacy, the Commission confirms that Life Chiropractic College West has met the WSCUC Standards at least at a minimal level. The Commission has scheduled the Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 on an accelerated timetable given LCCW’s having reached substantial compliance with three of its four Standards and the Commission’s expectations regarding the institution’s capacity to meet all Standards within this time frame.

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

“Life Chiropractic College West 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. Life Chiropractic College West is approved to offer only the Doctor of Chiropractic (DC) at its current location.

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 Seeking Accreditation Visit 2 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 Life Chiropractic College West’s 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 LCCW’s 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 LCCW 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/ro

Cc: William Ladusaw, Commission Chair
    Scott Donaldson, Vice President for Academic Administration/ALO
    Joseph Avender, Board Chair
    Members of the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 team
    Richard Osborn, Vice President, Staff Liaison