



January 16, 2015

WASC Senior College and University Commission
985 Atlantic Avenue, Ste 100
Alameda, CA 94501

Sent via email to Siobhan Williams at swilliams@wascsenior.org

RE: Response to EER Team Report

To the WASC Senior College and University Commission:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the “Report of the WASC Visiting Team Educational Effectiveness Review for Reaffirmation.” UWest appreciated the team’s visit from October 26 to 29, 2014, and I would like to thank the Commission on behalf of all students, faculty, and staff for choosing such an outstanding team with expertise in the areas most important to UWest at this time, including assessment and planning. Please extend our gratitude to visiting team members Dr. Joseph Hoey, Dr. Nancy Lecourt, Dr. Teri Cannon, Dr. David Sadava, and our WSCUC liaison, Dr. Christopher Oberg for their outstanding work.

The process of reaffirmation--starting with the Institutional Proposal and proceeding through the Capacity and Preparatory Review in 2010, Special Visit in 2012, and Educational Effectiveness Review in 2014--has been invaluable in helping UWest move forward, meet WSCUC standards, and provide a better education to more students. We could not have come as far as we have in such a short time without the guidance of WSCUC.

Our preparations for each visit prompted numerous improvements, many of which the WSCUC visiting teams have commended. The feedback from each team has provided critical insight into the success of our efforts and areas for continued improvement. These efforts have borne very tangible fruits in the form of unprecedented enrollment growth, new hiring, revenue growth, endowment growth, more degrees awarded, improved retention statistics, and happier students and staff.

The EER visiting team concluded their report with four commendations and six recommendations. We are gratified to receive the commendations in the areas where the most work has been accomplished, such as assessment implementation, the Board of Trustees expansion, leadership development, and better articulation of our mission. It is wonderful to receive the recognition of our peers on these accomplishments. UWest agrees wholeheartedly with the team’s six recommendations. Numerous changes have already been implemented in light of them, and their considerations have been folded into the strategic planning process.

UWest found the feedback of the visiting team members extremely useful in gauging the successful implementation of the new ‘culture of assessment’ in all programs. Departments will continue to streamline their program review process particularly in light of workloads and various ongoing assessment and annual review processes.

UWest has recently reorganized the existing Retention Committee for the purpose of more in-depth evaluation of student success data, including detailed disaggregation by student status and demographic characteristics. While UWest already collects, tracks, and analyzes this data, the level of disaggregation expected has not previously been possible for such a small student body. In many cases, disaggregation leads to single digit data pools that are not statistically valid measures. Nevertheless, UWest has assembled the

necessary technical and human infrastructure to utilize this data more. We look forward to what this quantitative data will reveal and to supplementing it with frequent qualitative data and research.

The strategic planning process moves forward on schedule, with continued meetings of the strategic planning working group to formulate five broad institutional goals. These five institutional goals have been drafted under a 'hub-and-spoke' framework. The so-called hub, or goal around which all others revolve, relates to creating a campus culture invested in acting strategically to live the mission. The four 'spokes' concern:

1. Academic development based on 'Three Pillars' of Inter/Cross-Disciplinary Education, Study Abroad, and Service. These pillars are concrete pedagogical strategies to implement UWest's mission and values.
2. Physical infrastructure that is beautiful and sustainable. UWest has retained a landscape architect and architectural firm to carefully plan improvements.
3. Professional development of the full-time faculty pool. A hiring plan will be created following the department strategic plans to reflect departmental priorities, strategic goals, and budget realities
4. Financial self-sufficiency through enrollment and revenue growth. A major part of the fourth 'spoke' is the enrollment management plan (see below).

The institutional strategic plan will inform the departmental strategic plans (Spring-Summer 2015) which will, in turn, inform the five-year strategic budget, which the strategic planning working group will reconvene to develop starting in Fall 2015, keeping the budget process inclusive and transparent.

Plans are in place to move to a more traditional undergraduate course schedule and reduce the number of courses meeting only once a week. More classes were offered on twice-per-week schedules in both Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 than in prior semesters. More funding is allocated in the 2015/16 budget to increase compensation for adjuncts who teach twice weekly starting in Fall 2015. The Business Department is also examining the efficacy of offering upper-level undergraduate and some graduate level courses on a twice weekly schedule.

The Dean of Enrollment has implemented an enrollment management plan that prioritizes undergraduate recruiting of local domestic students and international students from Asia. The dean will make a three-week recruiting trip to China, Korea, and Taiwan in March of 2015 to strengthen existing partnerships and explore new ones. The enrollment management plan also includes revisions of print marketing materials, a website overhaul, and hiring budget for two new full-time staff. UWest is confident that these changes will help us continue to meet our enrollment goals, as we have for the past two years.

Finally, UWest is improving professional development for graduate students. A Teaching Assistant policy was approved and was implemented in Fall 2014. The first clinical placement 'fair' for chaplaincy students will be held next week. Our newly hired Career Services Coordinator is assisting students with resume building and job and internship placement with much success. UWest is exploring additional options, such as a school-run psychology clinic and increased full-time faculty hiring, through the strategic planning process.

Thank you for considering these comments in response to the Report of the WASC Visiting Team Educational Effectiveness Review for Reaffirmation. We look forward to meeting with you on February 19 and hearing the decision of the Commission.

Sincerely,

Stephen Morgan
President