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**PRESIDENT**  
Ralph A. Wolf

March 7, 2011

Chin-Shun Wu  
President  
University of the West  
1409 N Walnut Grove Avenue  
Rosemead, CA 91770

Dear President Wu:

At its meeting on February 16-18, 2011 the Commission considered the report of the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) team that conducted the visit to University of the West (UWest) on December 1-3, 2010. The Commission also reviewed the Capacity and Preparatory Review report and exhibits submitted by the University prior to the visit and your January 25, 2011 response to the CPR team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues: Dean of Academic Affairs William Howe, Dean of Enrollment and Student Affairs Heemanshu Bhagat, and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies and Accreditation Liaison Officer Dr. Ken Locke. Your updates and observations were very helpful.

University of the West's institutional proposal outlined three themes for the Capacity and Preparatory Review: development and implementation of a comprehensive student enrollment and retention plan; improvement of assessment of student learning to ensure educational effectiveness at course, program, and institutional levels; and defining and adopting a "teacher-scholar-service leader" model to improve faculty performance in instruction, assessment, research, mentorship, and service. The team noted that while UWest's report adequately addressed these three themes, "the data provided with the report [were] insufficient and some of the data [were] inconsistent and inaccurate." In addition, the team found that UWest had not made expected progress on the themes, in keeping with the schedule set forth in the institutional proposal. The team noted that these three areas are "critical to UWest in the years to come" and that while engagement with them was demonstrated, "significant work [still needs] to be done prior to the EER."

The Commission acknowledges the positive steps taken to build UWest's leadership. These include your recent appointment as president, given your successful history in Taiwanese higher education and long-term commitment to the University, and the appointments of other education professionals with experience in Western higher education to important administrative posts. The commitment of the governing board to the mission, strength, and financial viability of the University is also commendable. The Commission likewise

acknowledges the diversity, commitment, passion, and devotion of the faculty, staff, and students. It notes that while many processes and procedures have only been recently implemented, they show promise for supporting institutional growth and providing the academic infrastructure needed to meet the challenges that the University is facing.

However, the Commission has serious concerns about several issues raised in the team report and highlights the following areas for immediate attention.

**Institutional Purposes, Objectives, and Integrity.** The team, encountering conflicting statements at UWest about the identity of the institution, stated that “UWest needs to clarify and articulate its identity by addressing the perceived tension between its desire to be fully Western and its dedication to infuse and promote Buddhist values and wisdom.” The response to the team report that you provided states that UWest’s goal is to “further interaction between eastern and western cultures, not to be a ‘fully Western’ university” and that “UWest understands itself as an institution where East and West meet...not as a place where East becomes West.” The Commission expressed its support for this mission and, at the same time, urges UWest to clarify and communicate the mission more clearly to the UWest community and the public. The mission should be deeply embedded in the culture and life of the University and guide its decisions and plans. The Commission also recommended that the University consider more deeply the distinctive elements of UWest and its place in the higher education community so that it may better articulate and demonstrate that, within its unique mission, it understands and meets the WASC Standards of Accreditation. (CFRs 1.1, 1.6, 1.9)

**Governance and Leadership.** The Commission concurs with team recommendations about the governing board and has questions about whether the board is meeting the expectations set forth in Criterion for Review 3.9. WASC expects boards to be independent, to have authority to exercise oversight over institutional integrity, policies, and operations, and to evaluate the president. Among the team findings that led to this concern are the fact that the board meets only twice a year and that its meetings are not often held at the University’s campus or even in the region. The Commission urges the board to engage in appropriate development activities and to expand its membership to include more members with the knowledge and experience required to govern an accredited American institution of higher education, including expertise in finances, academic affairs, and planning. The Commission was encouraged to learn in your response to the team report that you agree with this recommendation and are considering additional appointments in the near future. In addition, the Commission recommends that the board consider meeting more frequently, and convening more of its meetings at the University to provide an opportunity for engagement with faculty, students and staff. Further, in order to demonstrate the independence of the board, UWest should clarify the relationship between the University and its sponsoring entity, the Fo Guang Shan order. (CFRs 1.6, 3.9)

For a variety of reasons beyond the control of the University, there has been frequent turnover in the executive leadership at UWest over the past five years. This situation, coupled with the University’s practice of having leaders serve in multiple roles, has resulted in a lack of strong and consistent leadership and unclear lines of decision making and accountability. The team found that this situation has impaired UWest’s growth and development. The Commission

acknowledges that your service as president had just begun at the time of the CPR visit and it appreciates that you have made a long-term commitment to the University. As noted above, the Commission also recognizes that several new administrative appointments have been made recently. The Commission urges the leadership and board to evaluate whether the University has a sufficient cadre of appropriately qualified and experienced administrators to provide leadership and management in all aspects of the University's operation, in keeping with CFR 3.10. Further, the Commission expects to see stable leadership and clear lines of accountability and decision making by the time of the next visit. (CFRs 1.3, 3.8, 3.9)

**Adequate Resources and Strategic Planning to Ensure Sustainability.** The team found that UWest has very limited resources and relies heavily on contributions from members of several Buddhist temples and foundations. The team indicates that "a review of the financial data for the past [five] years... raises concerns about stability and the ability for the institution to sustain its operations and support the achievement of its educational objectives." The Commission acknowledges your response to the team report, indicating that you and the new chief financial officer "are exploring ways to improve the University's revenue stream and enlarge its endowment." Although the Commission acknowledges that UWest is debt free and stable, this result has been achieved at the expense of adequate funding in several areas of the University's operation. The Commission endorses the team's recommendation that UWest "must invest additional resources to achieve its priority strategic objectives" by making substantial investments in student life, student services, academic programs, additional qualified faculty, faculty training and development, program staffing, and enrollment services. The Commission urges UWest to examine all aspects of its operation in order to identify areas that are not adequately resourced and to develop plans to better support programs, students and faculty. The University should also proceed with its plans to increase enrollment, track graduation and retention, and publish student achievement data. The Commission was encouraged to learn from your response to the team report that actions are already being taken to address this concern. Finally, UWest is expected to show that it has and is using accurate and up-to-date data from institutional research to inform the development and implementation of plans and guide resource allocation. (CFRs 1.2, 2.6, 2.10, 3.1-3.5, 4.1-4.5)

**Faculty Policies and Practices and Academic Programs.** The team found that there are not a sufficient number of faculty members "to adequately serve departments and to provide curricular assessment and growth as well as appropriately manage academic governance." The Commission shares the team's concerns about the lack of criteria for hiring; the need for fair and equitable policies on workload, advancement, scholarship and creative activity; and support for faculty development, which are critical elements of building a core of committed faculty members. Exacerbating these concerns is the fact that the University offers so many programs for so few students, which results in inappropriate overlap of coursework at different levels. The Commission urges UWest to develop sound policies concerning faculty, in keeping with the WASC Standards, and to address the questions raised here and in the team report about the extensive array of offerings and the implications of this model for instructional level, coherence of study, academic integrity, and faculty staffing and roles. The planned staff and faculty retreats, described in your letter, provide an opportunity to begin addressing these concerns, to

evaluate the efficacy of the current program offerings, and to develop new, much-needed policies related to faculty. (CFRs 2.1, 2.2, 2.8, 2.9, 3.1-3.4, 3.11)

**Preparation for the Educational Effectiveness Review.** Under the Standards of Accreditation, educational effectiveness is based on the core functions of teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, and support for student learning and success together with a commitment to learning and improvement. The Commission has serious concerns that the many capacity issues set forth above, must be addressed before UWest can undertake a successful Educational Effectiveness Review. As the University addresses the capacity challenges described above and detailed in the team report, consideration should be given to ensuring the adequacy of resources to support educational effectiveness. Measurable, well-framed student learning outcomes need to be developed and adopted by the faculty at the program, course and, where appropriate, institutional level. The EER team will expect to see that direct measures for assessing student learning have been implemented along with tools that promote good assessment practice, such as faculty-developed rubrics. Processes for assessing co-curricular programs should be adopted and the suspended program review process should be reinstated. The general education component of the undergraduate program needs to be evaluated and refined in light of the mission of the institution, with clearly stated outcomes and a process for assessing learning. The EER team will expect to be presented with completed program reviews and results of assessment that demonstrate the level of student learning and show steps taken to improve learning. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.11, 4.4, 4.6-4.8)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Capacity and Preparatory Review report and continue the accreditation of University of the West.
- ✓ 2. Schedule a Special Visit for fall 2012 to focus on the capacity issues identified in this letter and the team report. The institution's Special Visit report will be due eight weeks prior to the visit.
- ✓ 3. Reschedule the Educational Effectiveness Review visit from spring 2012 to fall 2014. The institution's EER report is due 12 weeks prior to the scheduled visit.

The Commission took the unusual action of interrupting the three-stage review process by adding the Special Visit before the EER because of serious concerns about the capacity of the University and its readiness for the Educational Effectiveness Review. This delay in the completion of the reaccreditation process is intended to give UWest time to address the challenges described in this letter and to better position itself for a successful EER, which will now be conducted in about four years. The Commission urges UWest to make the best of this additional time to address the areas identified in this letter related to both Core Commitments – to Capacity and to Educational Effectiveness. The following steps or actions should be taken to and evidence of these steps should be provided in the Special Visit report:

1. Clarification of the institution's mission, to ensure that all constituents understand it and that it provides the foundation for institutional planning and decision making. The mission should be well publicized, understood by the community and stated in relevant materials about the University.
2. Resolution of concerns about the governing board including its relation to the sponsoring order, its authority, the frequency and venue of its meetings, and its size and expertise. UWest should carry out its planned expansion of the governing board in a timely fashion and include among its new members persons with expertise in American higher education, including finances, academic affairs, and planning. A roster of the board, board member biographies, board minutes, and a schedule of planned meetings should be provided to document these changes. The procedures, tools, and timeline for evaluation of the president should also be available.
3. Determination whether the UWest has a sufficient cadre of appropriately qualified and experienced administrators to provide leadership and management in all aspects of the University's operation. UWest should provide an explanation of its analysis and organization charts illustrating reporting lines, accountability and decision making; job descriptions; information on new hires; and administrators' resumes.
4. Provision of adequate resources to meet its mission and support its educational offerings, as demonstrated by balanced budgets, the sufficiency of funding in various areas, and increasing enrollment. UWest should provide documentation showing that it is providing adequate resources for student services, academic programming, qualified faculty to meet the needs of all academic programs, faculty training and development, program staffing, and enrollment services. This should include plans to increase enrollment, data on retention and graduation, the publication of data on student achievement, and the availability of accurate and useful data for planning and decision making.
5. Analysis of the efficacy of the current array of program offerings in view of enrollment and the need for qualified faculty for each program. Related is the need to address the inappropriate overlap of coursework at different levels, including the graduate and undergraduate levels. Documentation should include the current listing of programs and courses for each program along with faculty assigned to teach in each program; and minutes of meetings or reports analyzing the efficacy of the current offerings.
6. Adoption and implementation of fair and equitable faculty policies and procedures concerning qualifications, hiring procedures, workload, retention and advancement, scholarship and creative activity, and professional development.
7. Development of the infrastructure for assessment of student learning, including measurable learning outcomes at the course, program, and institution level; assessment plans that include direct methods for assessing student learning and tools that promote good assessment practices; and development of the faculty's capacity to assess and improve student learning. Refinement of general education outcomes is also expected.

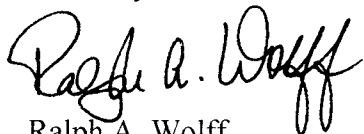
The Commission requests a meeting between WASC staff and representatives of the University, including senior leadership, faculty leadership, the ALO, and the chair of the governing board within 90 days following receipt of this letter. The purposes of the meeting are to discuss the areas of Commission concern noted in this letter and the institution's plan for responding to the action.

The Commission further requests that the governing board of the institution attend a meeting conducted by WASC at which the issues noted in this letter and the Board's role and response to the Commission's concerns will be discussed. Please contact Philip Cole Regis in the WASC office to schedule the meetings.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of University of the West'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.

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/DH/aa

cc: Linda Johnsrud, Commission Chair  
Kenneth Locke, ALO  
Man Tsu Chang, Executive Trustee  
Members of the CPR team  
Diane Harvey, Vice President, WASC