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May 1, 2019

Dr. Mark B. Goor, Vice-President  
WASC Senior College and University Commission  
985 Atlantic Ave., Ste. 100  
Alameda, CA 94501

Dear Vice-President Goor:

Pursuant to the WSCUC Action Letter dated June 30, 2017, University of the West (UWest) is pleased to submit this progress report to provide an update on the four areas identified by the Commission for further development. As noted in the 6/30 Action Letter:

*1) While the institution is striving to develop further its graduate culture, more attention needs to be paid to faculty support. Areas to address include the student-faculty ratio for graduate mentoring (CFR 3.1, 3.2), clarity of expectations for tenure and promotion (CFR 2.8, 3.2), and professional development (CRF 2.9, 3.3).*

**Student-faculty ratio for graduate mentoring (CFR 3.1, 3.2)**

Over the past two years, steep declines in international student enrollment and moderate declines in domestic student enrollment, mirroring nationwide trends, have resulted in UWest's 20% deficit in enrollment projections for 2018-19. This enrollment decline, in addition to the statistically expected decreases due to attrition and graduation, has had the unintentional result of decreasing UWest's overall graduate student-faculty ratio (i.e., 12.6:1 in spring 2017, 10.6:1 in spring 2019, as calculated by student and faculty FTE).

Despite an overall decrease in graduate student-faculty ratio, some departments and graduate programs have experienced increases in their student-faculty ratios. The Buddhist Chaplaincy Department is comprised of the DBMin program and the MDiv program. Enrollment in both programs has increased slightly from spring 2017 to spring 2019 (MDiv is up approximately 2.8 FTE; DBMin is up approximately 4.3 FTE), while the number of core faculty (i.e., the only faculty able to serve as advisors/dissertation supervisors/mentors) has remained the same. The student-faculty ratios for both programs (and the department) have therefore increased from spring 2017 to spring 2019 (MDiv from 13.4:1 to 15.2:1 and DBMin from 1.9:1 to 2.8:1). Overall, the Buddhist Chaplaincy student-faculty ratio has increased from 15.3:1 in spring 2017 to 17.9:1 in spring 2019. These ratios were calculated based on student FTE; ratios calculated based on student headcount have similarly increased.

The Religious Studies (REL) Department is comprised of the REL MA program and the REL PhD program. Enrollment in both programs has remained static from spring 2017 to spring 2019; however, student FTE in both programs has decreased significantly. This is primarily accounted for within PhD student dissertation enrollment, where a doctoral candidate counts as 1.0 FTE for the first six semesters of enrollment past candidacy and 0 FTE for all subsequent semesters. Spring 2017 had 9.0 FTE of dissertation enrollment; due

to multiple candidates progressing past the seventh semester of enrollment over the following two years, spring 2019 saw only 3.0 FTE of dissertation enrollment. Furthermore, one Religious Studies Department core faculty member passed away following the spring 2017 semester. These factors together have resulted in increased student-faculty ratios (when calculated by headcount), yet decreased student-faculty ratios (when calculated by FTE) for the two REL programs and the department overall.

Please see attached supplemental page for graduate enrollment and student-faculty ratio data for spring 2017 and spring 2019.

The ratio of doctoral students to dissertation advisors within the Religious Studies Department is anticipated to improve in the fall 2019 semester, when Dr. Shou-Jen Kuo, currently an adjunct faculty member in the Religious Studies Department and Assistant Director of the Institute for the Study of Humanistic Buddhism, will assume a full-time faculty appointment (including doctoral student advisement and dissertation committee participation/chairing) in the Religious Studies Department. The university is also currently reviewing applications to fill a full-time, tenure-track, assistant professorship in the Department of Psychology, which is anticipated to normalize the advising and teaching workload of the current chair, Dr. Ashley Coleman, following the former chair's departure in spring of 2018. By replacing the second full-time Psychology Department faculty position, the new hire will help advance the department's research function.

In December 2018, CAO Dr. Peter M. Rojcewicz's initial capital expense proposals to hire two additional full-time faculty members (within the departments of Business Administration and Religious Studies, respectively) were well-received by the UWest Board of Trustees. The CAO is optimistic that the final, data-supported proposals will be approved by the board during its July 2019 meeting, with the search process beginning shortly thereafter. In addition, I developed a sophisticated fundraising strategy, one feature of which is to endow two faculty chairs in the graduate programs: one in Religious Studies and the other in Buddhist Chaplaincy. Both departments offer doctoral programs and so those future endowed positions will have a positive impact on student advising workload and quality.

### **Clarity of expectations for tenure and promotion**

Over the 2017-18 academic year, the UWest Faculty Senate, in conjunction with Academic Consultant Dr. John Gingrich, former UWest President Dr. Stephen Morgan, and CAO Dr. Peter M. Rojcewicz, revised the UWest Faculty Handbook (<http://ie-outcomes.uwest.edu/2018uwestfacultyhandbook.pdf>). Faculty were involved at every step of the review and drafting of all faculty related policies, including those on tenure, promotion, and sabbatical leave. The Faculty Handbook was accepted by the UWest Faculty Senate and later reviewed by the Board of Trustees at the December 2018 meeting.

### **Professional development**

In response to the 20% downturn in the university's enrollment, faculty agreed to the strategic decision to reallocate remaining 2018-19 professional development funds towards online course development and delivery training. For the past two years, faculty have indicated a strong desire to receive training in these areas, cognizant of the potential positive impact on student enrollment numbers and the ability of UWest to

engage its local and global community. The recent enrollment drop lent urgency to the issue in the faculty's and university's eyes.

Currently, a cohort of several faculty members from different departments are participating in weekly 2-hour workshop sessions in online course development and quality assurance training, led by Dr. Edward Shih, the UWest Educational Technology Consultant. Further support is provided by IT Manager and Professor of Business Administration (Computer Information Systems), Rafael Wu. Courses developed this spring will be beta-tested this summer, with a goal of launching online course options in the fall 2019 semester. Assessment of faculty training, equipment, and support, as well as student satisfaction surveys and learning outcomes, will be coordinated by Ms. Jessa Forsythe-Crane, UWest's Institutional Effectiveness Manager.

Finally, institutional Faculty Research Awards totaling \$10,000 have been granted to UWest faculty over the last two years. The purpose of the award is to support faculty development through research activities and stimulate interest in research on part of all faculty members, full-time and part-time.

*2) Given the dynamic and rapidly changing environment in higher education and the changing financial position of the institution, University of the West should continue to monitor its goals, subsidiary goals, and metrics and revise these as needed. In particular, taking into account current financial and enrollment levels, the institution should concentrate on developing realistic tactical, operational, and concrete steps in support of its strategic goals. (CFR 4.6)*

UWest's strategic plan for 2015-2020 and its subsidiary goals, which previously received commendation from the Commission for its collaborative and inclusive process, was regularly updated through the fall of 2017 by former Institutional Planning, Effectiveness, and Campus Culture Officer Rev. Dr. Monica Sanford, with revisions to goals and metrics, as needed. Rev. Dr. Sanford left UWest at the beginning of the spring 2018 semester and was replaced by Institutional Effectiveness Manager Jessa Forsythe-Crane at the end of the spring 2018 semester.

Ms. Forsythe-Crane familiarized herself with the strategic plan and the institution's goals over summer 2018 and developed a timeline for the collaborative development of the 2020-2025 strategic plan, beginning in fall of 2018. However, the 20% enrollment decline in fall 2018 had a significant impact on the university's current financial circumstances, resulting in the need for immediate revision and reprioritization of institutional goals. Planning efforts have been re-oriented towards: (a) increasing enrollment; (b) constraining costs; and (c) diversifying revenue through fundraising. Cross-campus collaboration has resulted in the development of specific operational steps towards achieving these goals.

For example, addressing the area of increasing enrollment and improving retention, new academic programs (e.g., new concentrations in data analytics and contemplative studies; online certificates in Buddhist chaplaincy, etc.) have been proposed, based on current regional and federal job sector growth projections, as well as on current student interest and faculty expertise. Meetings involving all campus constituencies are scheduled through spring and summer 2019 for ongoing discussion related to mission revitalization and institutional identity, with the goal of developing a branding and marketing strategy. Former Dean of Student

Affairs Vanessa Karam has stepped into the position of Chief Enrollment Officer, bringing her decades of institutional knowledge and context to bear in the revision of the University's strategic enrollment management plan.

In February 2019, Director of Enrollment and Student Outreach Steven Hong initiated a new online ad campaign to generate additional clicks and website visits. The institution is also investing in increased ad buys and click purchases, shifting towards greater utilization of social media. It is seeking to upgrade its website and landing pages to make it easier for potential students to find necessary information. Academic Affairs has also established the office of Academic International Programs and Engagement, under the leadership of Associate Dean Michael Grosso, who has, over the past year, reviewed and removed artificial obstacles to international 2+2 student recruitment by creating a digital English placement testing platform, allowing the university to gain advance knowledge of more realistic enrollment numbers.

Cost constraint initiatives have centered on increasing and maximizing operational efficiency. This includes restructuring the student worker program to maximize efficiency (i.e., departments must justify budget/hours requests for student workers, rather than being allocated a flat budget/number of hours per academic year) and analyzing the course schedule to eliminate redundancies and cross-list courses when pedagogically appropriate, thereby allowing UWest to achieve minimum class size targets and reduce its adjunct budget. The office of the President is responsible for fundraising; I recently introduced my "Build a Better World" capital campaign, which is currently in soft launch and will enter its public phase on May 16, 2019 with a donor banquet. It is anticipated that the campus community's conversations around institutional identity will support fundraising efforts.

*3) Through enrollment management planning, the institution should focus attention on how realistic growth in undergraduate and graduate enrollments will be achieved and how retention will be improved, including branding and outreach efforts (CFR 3.4)*

(Please see above response for an overview of how the issues of enrollment growth and retention are being addressed by UWest).

*4) The institution should develop and implement a structured process for collecting and using qualitative data to increase student learning and success across diverse student cohorts, with attention paid to the distinct needs of both domestic and international students related to academic preparation and college readiness. (CFR 2.10)*

Since joining UWest in May of 2018, Institutional Effectiveness Manager Jessa Forsythe-Crane has been developing a structured process for collecting and analyzing qualitative student success data across diverse cohorts. The international undergraduate exchange student focus group in fall 2018 provided data that will inform changes to new student orientation and residential programming; the first-year-freshmen focus group in spring 2019 provided data that will inform improvements to cross-campus communication strategy, increase student utilization of the Student Success Center academic tutoring program, and strengthen academic and social interactions between domestic and international students. Next academic year, two

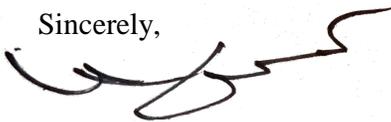
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additional focus groups (i.e., with transfer-in/re-entry students and MBA students) will be added, with assessment results reviewed in the University Wide Assessment Council (UWAC). UWAC will then recommend improvements based on assessment data.

In summary, UWest is working towards the ability to maintain low student-faculty ratios in its graduate departments even after enrollment numbers rebound. Expectations, policies, and procedures surrounding tenure and promotion have been clarified in the revised Faculty Handbook, and faculty have committed professional development funds towards the development and implementation of online course offerings, with a view to the enrollment gains and subsequent professional development opportunities such gains would make possible. The institution is modifying its current strategic plan (as well as its approach to the 2020-2025 strategic planning process) by revisiting strategic priorities and metrics and prioritizing innovation and efficiency in response to the enrollment decline. Qualitative, narrative feedback is being collected and reviewed, and will be used to improve student success both inside and outside of the classroom, with systematic additions to feedback-gathering opportunities planned for the next academic year.

University of the West wishes to express its appreciation to the Commission for its ongoing commitment to a peer-based accreditation process that adds value to institutions, while contributing to public accountability. We are pleased to offer our continued support of this process. Please contact me if you have any questions about this progress report.

Sincerely,



Otto H. Chang, Ph.D.  
President, University of the West

OHC/pmr/jfc

CC: Dr. Peter M. Rojcewicz, Chief Academic Officer and Accreditation Liaison Officer  
Vanessa Karam, Chief Enrollment and Student Affairs Officer  
Jessa Forsythe-Crane, Institutional Effectiveness Manager

**ENROLLMENT AND STUDENT-FACULTY RATIO DATA – SPRING 2017 AND SPRING 2019**

<b>HEADCOUNT</b>	<b>Spring 2017</b>	<b>Spring 2019</b>
MDiv	24	26
DBMin	6	10
<b>Buddhist Chaplaincy Department</b>	30	36
MBA/Post-MBA Certificate	67	46
<b>Business Administration Department</b>	67	46
MFT	22	16
<b>Psychology Department</b>	22	16
REL MA	7	7
REL PhD	33	33
<b>Religious Studies Department</b>	40	40
<b>All graduate programs combined</b>	159	138

<b>FTE</b>	<b>Spring 2017</b>	<b>Spring 2019</b>
MDiv	26.8	30.3
DBMin	3.8	5.6
<b>Buddhist Chaplaincy Department</b>	30.6	35.9
MBA/Post-MBA Certificate	64.8	38.2
<b>Business Administration Department</b>	64.8	38.2
MFT	22	16.4
<b>Psychology Department</b>	22	16.4
REL MA	7	6.3
REL PhD	12.4	9
<b>Religious Studies Department</b>	19.4	15.3
<b>All graduate programs combined</b>	138.4	105.9

<b>HC STUDENT-FACULTY RATIO</b>	<b>Spring 2017</b>	<b>Spring 2019</b>
MDiv	12:1	13:1
DBMin	3:1	5:1
<b>Buddhist Chaplaincy Department</b>	15:1	18:1
MBA/Post-MBA Certificate	22.3:1	15.3:1
<b>Business Administration Department</b>	22.3:1	15.3:1
MFT	22:1	16:1
<b>Psychology Department</b>	22:1	16:1
REL MA	1.4:1	1.8:1
REL PhD	6.6:1	8.3:1
<b>Religious Studies Department</b>	8:1	10:1
<b>All graduate programs combined</b>	14.5:1	13.8:1

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MDiv	13.4:1	15.2:1
DBMin	1.9:1	2.8:1
<b>Buddhist Chaplaincy Department</b>	15.3:1	17.9:1
MBA/Post-MBA Certificate	21.6:1	12.7:1
<b>Business Administration Department</b>	21.6:1	12.7:1
MFT	22:1	16.4:1
<b>Psychology Department</b>	22:1	16.4:1
REL MA	1.4:1	1.6:1
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