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**PRESIDENT**  
Mary Ellen Petrisko

March 6, 2015

Mr. David Burcham  
President  
Loyola Marymount University  
One LMU Drive  
Los Angeles, CA 90045

Dear President Burcham:

At its meeting February 18-20, 2015, the Commission considered the report of the Accreditation Visit (AV) team that conducted the visit to Loyola Marymount University (LMU), September 24-26, 2014. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by the university prior to the Offsite Review (OSR), the supplemental materials requested by the team following the OSR, and the institution's November 21, 2014 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you, Joseph Hellige, Executive Vice President and Provost, and Margaret Kasimatis, Associate Provost. Your comments were very helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations.

In the July 9, 2008, Commission letter after the Special Visit to LMU, five areas were identified for further attention and development: 1) creating a culture of evidence; 2) linking long-range financial and academic planning; 3) enhancing whole-person education and education in service of faith; 4) creating a learning organization; and 5) institutionalizing assessment of student learning.

Overall, the team concluded that LMU had successfully addressed the Commission's recommendations. LMU has:

- developed "a culture of assessment that permeates the institution;"
- created carefully crafted student learning outcomes, put in place a "robust infrastructure" to assess those outcomes, and provided ample evidence that the results of the assessments have been used for improvement;
- integrated planning and resource allocation, based on the academic core of the institution;
- developed a substantial and multi-staged program review process;
- implemented an outcomes-based new core curriculum;
- established mechanisms for regular feedback and continuous improvement.

LMU was part of Pilot 2 and was required to address the following four components in its institutional report: 1) meaning, quality and rigor of the degrees offered by LMU; 2) student proficiencies; 3) student success; and 4) sustainability: how LMU will ensure its institutional capacity and educational effectiveness in the future and respond to the changing environment for higher education.

With regard to these components, the team made the following commendations:

**Meaning, quality and rigor of degrees.** The team reported that LMU “clearly articulated the meaning of both its graduate and undergraduate degrees,” drawing on institution-wide educational outcomes for undergraduates and on expectations for student learning for graduate students. In terms of monitoring the quality and rigor of its degrees, LMU has put in place a comprehensive multi-year system of program review. However, the team noted that the program review process frequently stalled in the final steps, and overall program review completion has been “sluggish.”

**Student proficiencies.** Although LMU was not required to assess any of the core competencies in CFR 2.2a, the university has completed its first cycle of assessment of all five core competencies: written communication, oral communication, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and information literacy. According to the team, “LMU has developed assessment processes that are meaningful and useful” and has used the results “to improve pedagogy, curriculum, and support services.” The team commended LMU for its institution-wide enthusiasm for assessment, the consistent articulation of assessment’s added value, and the development of a strong supportive infrastructure for the assessment of student learning. Overall, the team praised LMU for being “a leader in the region in evaluating the core competencies.”

**Student success.** The team applauded LMU for the widespread commitment to student success among faculty, staff and administrators and for the evidence-based approach used to understand the student experience. LMU has developed a strategic retention plan, identified and assessed learning outcomes for co-curricular activities, and conducted program reviews for academic support and student services units. Especially noteworthy is the “significant coordination of assessment efforts” between student affairs and academic affairs. With regard to undergraduate retention and graduation, LMU has analyzed aggregated and disaggregated data and carried out “significant work” to understand why some categories of students appear to be more successful than others.

**Sustainability.** LMU’s sound fiscal management has allowed the institution the flexibility to invest in strategic initiatives and to be resilient in the face of major challenges in the higher education environment. LMU’s strategic plan identifies its high priorities for the future: increasing affordability, maintaining competitiveness in the market for students, being accountable for the quality of education, and supporting excellence in graduate education. LMU has worked diligently to link resource allocations with its strategic goals. The team was impressed with the level of acceptance and support for LMU’s strategic budget process. The team observed, however, that the strategic plan could benefit from improved processes for monitoring progress toward goals. The Commission endorses the team’s commendations and wishes to acknowledge LMU’s demonstrated commitment to student success; its well-defined trajectories for

institutionalizing educationally effective assessment practices and processes; and faculty and administrative leadership that have worked collaboratively to pursue an evidence-based approach to decision-making.

The Commission endorses the recommendations of the AV team and wishes to emphasize the following areas for further attention and development:

**Strengthening program review.** Though LMU has well-established procedures for the review of its academic programs, the team observed that all reviews have not been completed in a timely manner. The Commission expects LMU to move more expeditiously to complete the program review process and to ensure that all reviews result in a Memo of Understanding, an action plan, and a follow-up assessment plan. More expedient completion of program reviews will help departments carry out the recommendations in a timely fashion. The Commission was pleased to learn that LMU will be reviewing its program review process and revising its guidelines with the goal of streamlining procedures and eliminating some of the bottlenecks. (CFR 2.7)

**Measuring progress on strategic goals.** LMU's strategic plan maps out future directions. Continued development of metrics to measure progress will assist the institution in knowing when its goals are achieved. The Commission expects LMU to develop clear, specific, observable measures for determining when milestones are achieved and to make systematic progress on the priorities identified in the plan. The institution's response to the team report indicates that LMU will be developing new or revising existing metrics to yield better information about the impact of actions on the achievement of strategic goals. The Commission endorses these efforts. (CFRs 4.1, 4.3, 4.6)

**Monitoring new initiatives.** At the time of the visit, LMU had launched three major initiatives: implementing the new core curriculum; switching from a three-unit to a four-unit curriculum in the Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts; and growing its graduate enrollment. The Commission was pleased to learn that each of these initiatives has a designated committee, advisory group, or task force that oversees it. The Commission expects LMU to carefully monitor the impact of these changes, as appropriate, on student learning, student progress to the degree, student services, faculty workload, faculty hiring, and the like. (CFRs 2.1, 2.2a, 2.2b)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Accreditation Visit team report and reaffirm the accreditation of Loyola Marymount University for ten years, through February 2025.
2. Schedule the Offsite Review for spring 2024 and the Accreditation Visit for fall 2024.
3. Schedule the Mid-Cycle Review for spring 2020.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that Loyola Marymount University has addressed the two Core Commitments to Institutional



Capacity and Educational Effectiveness, and has successfully completed the Pilot 2 review conducted under the 2008 Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review, the institution is encouraged to continue its progress, particularly with respect to student learning and success.

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

Please note that the Criteria for Review (CFR) cited in this letter refer to the *2008 Handbook of Accreditation*. The *2008 Handbook* continues to be available on the WSCUC website at [www.wascenior.org](http://www.wascenior.org).

As the institution works on the issues cited in this letter, it should be mindful of the expectations that it will need to meet at the time of its next comprehensive review, which will take place under the revised Standards of Accreditation and institutional review process in the *2013 Handbook of Accreditation*.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that Loyola Marymount University undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WSCUC 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 contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Mary Ellen Petrisko  
President

MEP/bgd

Cc: William Ladusaw, Commission Chair  
Margaret Kasimatis, ALO  
Kathleen Aikenhead, Board Chair  
Members of the AV team  
Barbara Gross Davis, WSCUC liaison