



February 28, 2008

Robert Brower  
President  
Point Loma Nazarene University  
3900 Lomaland Drive  
San Diego, 92106

Dear President Brower:

At its meeting on February 21-22, 2008, the Commission considered the report of the evaluation team that conducted the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) at Point Loma Nazarene University (PLNU) on October 3-5 2007. The Commission also had access to the University's EER report, the report of the visiting team, and the institutional response to the team report, dated January 11, 2008. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you, Keith Bell, and John Hawthorne. Your comments were helpful.

The Point Loma Nazarene University Educational Effectiveness Report was framed around six essays, three of which addressed quality assurance processes: assessment, new program development, and program review. The other three essays addressed PLNU's institutional mission themes: "To Teach, to Shape, and to Send." In addition, the report addressed recommendations from the team report and action letter following the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR). The EER team found the institutional report to be outstanding in its clarity and organization, offering ease of navigation in cross-referencing proposed goals, CPR and EER activities, and the University's findings. The team commended PLNU for its report package, particularly its CD of extensive supporting materials, and suggested it might be a valuable model for other institutions. PLNU's use of a web-based interface for the CD made it particularly useful. The team felt well prepared for its campus visit, where it confirmed its sense that the campus community was broadly involved in the discussion of the reflective essays. During the campus visit, the team met with a range of administrators, faculty, staff and students in candid, thoughtful discussions about the University's report and findings.

The Commission commends the University for its responsiveness to the previous review, as it prioritized 83 campus CPR recommendations into five priorities for the EER. The University responded effectively to the issues outlined in the action letter following the CPR, including: board development,

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stronger linking of strategic planning with annual budget development, and establishing a Vice Provost for Graduate Studies position that has quickly focused on streamlining policies, procedures, and support for the rapidly growing off-campus graduate program division. The University also undertook detailed evaluation of its graduation and retention rates, showing steady improvement in those figures. The team found that while PLNU is developing appropriate infrastructure to more systematically review its programs and practices in light of retention and graduation rates, the University is strongly encouraged to develop and review data to ensure that the increased rates are not solely the result of selectivity in admissions. The University recognizes that it should track groups of students, such as part-time and transfer students, more carefully.

In addressing its three themes, “To Teach, to Shape, to Send,” PLNU’s inquiry was serious in terms of addressing its success in these areas critical to the University’s mission. Measurement and analysis of student learning in each of these areas are in preliminary stages. However, PLNU provided different sources of evidence that its efforts are effective in shaping and preparing students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attributes to become contributing members of a larger community.

In addition to the observations and suggestions in the team report, which the University is urged to use in its quality improvement efforts over the coming years, the Commission would like to highlight the following areas for continued attention. These comments highlight ongoing refining of quality assurance processes with particular attention to how results of data analysis are shared and used to implement change.

**Assessment.** The Commission action letter of February 27, 2007 focused PLNU’s attention on the need for deepening its assessment efforts to evaluate performance of graduates in “writing, critical thinking, appreciation of diversity, and commitment to service.” The University responded with significant progress in defining meaningful outcomes as a basis for effective assessment practices consistent with its mission. However, the team found that PLNU’s efforts are uneven and would benefit from further attention to refinement of process, the intentional inclusion of students, and a formalized process to evaluate and renew the assessment process itself.

In moving to the next level, the University will need to express its learning outcomes in terms of higher-order levels of learning consistent with what would be expected at the completion of an undergraduate or graduate degree program. Further, the University is encouraged to align resources to meet the requirements of a robust assessment system. It will be important for PLNU to build on the data it is already collecting and utilize it more effectively as it moves forward. In addition, it should give priority to further developing tools and services to heighten the efficiency and effectiveness of ongoing assessment activities at the departmental level. The University might also consider making better use of its alumni community in assessing outcomes of educational effectiveness and in developing strategies to more effectively communicate the aggregated results of assessment activities to varying stakeholder groups. PLNU is encouraged to continue its commitment to support institutional effectiveness with a learning-centered, data-driven approach to institutional decision making.

**New Program Development/Program Review.** In its EER, PLNU addressed the challenges of integrating its many new graduate programs into the organizational infrastructure and strategic planning processes. Its new Vice Provost for Graduate Studies has streamlined administrative functions, standardizing programs, implementing performance assessment, and commencing strategic planning. The Office for Graduate Studies is urged to continue to move aggressively to facilitate dialogue and implement policies to ensure that faculty teaching loads and scholarship expectations are adopted to recognize and adjust workload levels for faculty teaching at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

With regard to department and program review, PLNU has made significant progress in developing policies and practices to better frame and direct program review activities. Evidence from these processes shows that the faculty finds the reviews have a positive impact on curricular improvement. However, there are significant differences in the level of understanding of and engagement in the assessment process across academic and co-curricular departments in the use of identified standards, external reviewers, and involvement of alumni. PLNU is encouraged to employ the team report's suggestions for advancing this process, including the development of standardized templates for data and reports in department and program review.

The Commission acted to:

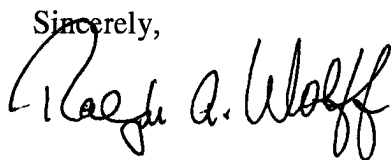
1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness Review report and reaffirm the accreditation of Point Loma Nazarene University.
2. Schedule the Capacity and Preparatory Review for fall 2017 and the Educational Effectiveness Review for spring 2019. The Institutional Proposal will be due on May 15, 2014.
3. Request that an interim report be submitted electronically by November 1, 2012. The interim report should provide evidence of clear and appropriate learning outcomes and assessment strategies, including a process for review and renewal of the assessment process itself. The report should provide evidence that the results of assessment are being used in decision making across the campus at program/department and institutional levels. Enclosed is a memorandum providing guidance on the format of an interim report.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that the institution has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness, and has successfully completed the multistage review conducted under the Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review, the institution is expected to continue its progress and be prepared to respond as expectations of institutional performance, especially with respect to Educational Effectiveness and student learning, further develop under the application of the Standards of Accreditation.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the Chair of the institution'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 contact me if you have any questions about the Commission's actions or the contents of this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ralph A. Wolff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Ralph A. Wolff  
President and Executive Director

RW/aa

cc: Sherwood Lingenfelter  
Board Chair  
Keith Bell, ALO  
Members of the team  
Ingrid Walker

Enclosure

## Interim Report Format and Instructions

When taking accreditation action under the *WASC Handbook of Accreditation*, the Commission may request additional reports focused on identified issues of concern. In such cases, the institution is asked to prepare an Interim Report following the format described below. The WASC Interim Report Committee reviews the report and responds to the institution with one of three outcomes: (1) receipt of the report with recommendations; (2) deferral of action pending receipt of follow-up information; or (3) receipt of the report with a recommendation that the Commission send a site visit team to follow up on specified issues

Interim Reports are intended to be limited in scope, not comprehensive evaluations of the institution. The report should help the Interim Report Committee to understand the progress made by the institution in addressing the issues identified by the Commission and the major recommendations of the last visiting team. Five copies are to be submitted to the WASC office by the date specified in the Commission action letter triggering the Interim Report (August 1<sup>st</sup>, November 1<sup>st</sup> or March 1<sup>st</sup>).

Resources for completing Interim Reports may be accessed in the Interim Report Resources section of the WASC website ([www.wascsenior.org](http://www.wascsenior.org)). If questions concerning the preparation of the Interim Report arise, the institutional "Accreditation Liaison Officer" (ALO) should contact the institution's designated WASC staff liaison.

If the Interim Report addresses financial issues, there are special reporting requirements in addition to those required for other issues. These additional reporting requirements are noted in this document where appropriate.

An Interim Report should include the following elements:

1. *Cover Sheet*. The cover sheet should specify that the document is an Interim Report. It should include the date of submission, the name and address of the institution, and the name of the person submitting the report.
2. *Table of Contents*.
3. *Institutional Context*. The purpose of this section is to describe the nature of the institution so that the Interim Report Committee can understand the issues discussed in the report in context. Very briefly describe the institution's background; mission; history, including the founding date and year first accredited; geographic locations; and other pertinent information.
4. *Statement on Report Preparation*. Briefly describe in narrative form the process of report preparation, providing the names and titles of those involved. Because of the focused nature of an Interim Report, the widespread and comprehensive involvement of various institutional constituencies is not normally required. Faculty, administrative staff, and others should be involved as appropriate to the topics being addressed in the preparation of the report. Campus constituencies, such as faculty leadership and, where appropriate, the governing

board, should review the report before it is submitted to WASC, and such reviews should be indicated in this statement.

5. *Response to Issues Identified by the Commission.* This main section of the Report should address the issues identified by the Commission in its action letter as topics for the Interim Report. Each topic identified in the Commission's action letter should be addressed. The team report may provide additional context and background for the institution's understanding of issues. Identify each key issue, providing a full description of the issue, the actions taken by the institution that address this issue, and an analysis of the effectiveness of these actions to date. Have the actions taken been successful in resolving the problem? What is the evidence supporting progress? What further problems or issues remain? How will these issues be addressed, by whom, and under what timetable? How will the institution know when the issue has been fully addressed? Please include a timeline that outlines planned steps with milestones and expected outcomes.
6. *Identification of Other Changes and Issues Currently Facing the Institution.* This brief section should identify any other significant changes that have occurred or issues that have arisen at the institution (e.g., changes in key personnel, addition of major new programs, modifications in the governance structure, unanticipated challenges, or significant financial results) that are not otherwise described in the preceding section. This information will help the Interim Report Committee gain a clearer sense of the current status of the institution and understand the context in which the actions of the institution discussed in the previous section have taken place.
7. *Concluding Statement.* Reflect on how the institutional responses to the issues raised by the Commission have had an impact upon the institution, setting forth follow-up steps to be taken.
8. *Required Documentation for all Interim Reports*
  - Current catalog(s) [CD-ROM or web-based catalog will suffice.]
  - Summary Data Form [may be found at <http://www.wascsenior.org>]
  - Complete set of Required Data Exhibits [may be found at <http://www.wascsenior.org>]
  - Most recent audited financial statements by an independent certified public accountant or, if a public institution, by the appropriate state agency; management letters, if any
  - Organization charts or tables, both administrative and academic, highlighting any major changes since the last visit

If any of the issues identified in the Commission's action letter relate to financial management or financial sustainability, the Interim Report must also include the following documents.

- Financial statements for the current fiscal year including Budgeted and Actual Year-to-Date and Budgeted and Actual Last Year Totals
- Projected budgets for the upcoming three fiscal years, including the key assumptions for each set of projections.