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July 7, 2014

Mr. Richard Kobritz
President
Columbia College Hollywood
18618 Oxnard Street
Tarzana, CA 91356-1411

Dear President Kobritz:

At its meetings June 18-20, 2014, the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) considered the report of the Special Visit for Initial Accreditation team that conducted an on-site visit to Columbia College Hollywood (CCH) on March 12-14, 2014. The Commission also reviewed the Special Visit for Initial Accreditation institutional report prepared by CCH prior to the visit, the institution's May 12, 2014 response to the visiting team report, and the documents relating to the Pathway B visit conducted on October 3-5, 2012. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you, Alan Gansberg, Chief Academic Officer and the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO), and consultants Betty Sundberg and Karen McClendon. Your comments were helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations.

The Commission granted candidacy to Columbia College Hollywood during the February 20-22, 2013, Commission meeting for a period of four years, following which CCH prepared an institutional report that focused on the four WSCUC Standards of Accreditation and Criteria for Review (CFR).

The Commission's letter dated March 11, 2013, highlighted four broad areas for consideration by the time of the Special Visit: governance development, including attention to Board of Trustees membership; review of reporting structures and enhancement of shared governance, to include faculty input on academic planning and review; educational effectiveness, including the completion of program reviews and "closing the loop" based on results from the reviews and embedding a culture of assessment that supports innovation and uses best practices; student completion, including efforts to retain and graduate students who find placement in the industry before program completion and to improve placement results upon graduation; and, finally, faculty ownership of the curriculum, including evidence that faculty have sufficient autonomy to engage in core academic activities.

The WSCUC visiting team commended CCH for "clarifying the institution's reporting structures, adding qualified members to the Board of Trustees and for continuing efforts to expand, diversify, and develop the Board." In this regard, it is noted that CCH has created a faculty liaison position to the Board to enhance transparency and facilitate direct faculty input.

The visiting team also commended CCH for “the depth to which Columbia College Hollywood, especially the faculty, have embraced the culture of assessment and continuous improvement.” CCH has completed reviews of the academic programs and provided evidence of how program improvements were designed and implemented based on those reviews.

The visiting team reported the first-time, full-time retention rate for the fall 2011 student cohort was 85%, an improvement over the 2010 and 2009 fall cohorts. However, CCH reported a two-year average graduation rate of 32.3% for entering freshmen and a 53.7% two-year average for transfer students. The visiting team expressed concern about these student completion results. They acknowledged that the competitive nature of the film and television industry means that students risk losing the opportunity for long-term employment if they turn down the more short-term opportunities, i.e. paid and unpaid internships or contract positions that interrupt enrollment. The visiting team was optimistic that the Student Success Committee’s efforts to improve retention will have a favorable impact on graduation rates in the future.

Finally, the development of the Faculty Academic Council and its standing committees and the work of the Faculty Engagement Subcommittee are acknowledged as fostering faculty ownership of the curriculum and advocating for the kind of faculty autonomy essential to shared governance.

The Commission endorses the findings, commendations and recommendations of the Special Visit team and emphasizes the following areas for further attention and development:

Clarity of mission. The mission of Columbia College Hollywood is “...twofold: to prepare artists with technical proficiency, and prepare technicians who are also artists...with the goal of preparing men and women to be ready to make immediate and significant contributions to the entertainment industry.” CCH is striving to be a liberal arts college, though there is a tension between this aspiration and the vocational nature of the mission and the needs of the students. The Commission recommends that CCH continue to clarify and develop its identity as a liberal arts college.

Cross-functional structures. The visiting team articulated the alignment between cross-functional teams and effective decision-making that sustains institutional capacity and educational effectiveness. CCH’s unstable enrollment over the last three fiscal years, particularly for a tuition-dependent institution, challenges stable financial planning and sustainability. CCH should constitute a formalized strategic enrollment management operation that includes functions throughout the student lifecycle, at a senior level within the College, and develop a comprehensive plan that bridges the institution’s academic and financial goals. CCH should also consider forming an executive cabinet that meets regularly to discuss, plan, and execute all of the key initiatives critical to the institution’s success. (CFRs 3.4, 3.6, 4.7)

Student success and risk. Unstable enrollment reflects possible challenges for CCH students including acquiring student debt without receiving a degree. The institutional report reflected CCH’s sensitivity to this issue, describing a study of 2012 graduates: sixty-three graduates had loans averaging approximately over \$37,000 and ten graduates had debt in excess of the total cost of the degree, i.e. approximately \$56,700. This is in tension with students’ temporary employment and income during the course of study that can help offset cost, but put retention at risk. Debt also

adds to the student's burden at the time of completion if he/she is not gainfully employed. The Commission urges CCH to generate multiple years of data about student indebtedness and, where possible, student and graduate placement, show evidence of using the analysis of those data to inform decision-making about retention and persistence.

Assessment and program review. CCH did a great deal of impressive work on assessment and program review since the last visit. The proposed program review cycle going forward is every two years and not the more typical five- to seven-year cycle. The team expressed concern that the shorter interval does not provide sufficient time to reflect on the information gathered throughout the program review process. CCH should consider building its annual assessment efforts through a longer-term program review schedule that will provide more time for reflection and deeper understanding of continuous improvement.

General education and core competencies. CCH manages a tension between providing an education that prepares students for a particular industry, i.e. film and television, and for personal development and contributions to civil society. The visiting team recommended development of the general education program that is not only integrated with that course of study, but with professional practice to have greater utility for students. Going forward, CCH should align work on general education with the development of the required core competencies to be able to document that students are acquiring knowledge and developing higher-order intellectual skills appropriate to their degree.

In light of the findings from the Special Visit to Columbia College Hollywood, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Special Visit team report and grant Initial Accreditation for five years.
2. Schedule the next comprehensive review with the Offsite Review in fall 2018 and the Accreditation Visit in spring 2019.
3. Request a Special Visit for fall 2016 on the following issues cited in this letter: 1) clarity of mission, 2) cross functional structures, 3) student success and risk, 4) assessment and program review, and, 5) general education and core competencies.
4. Schedule the Mid-Cycle Review for spring 2016.

In taking this action to grant Initial Accreditation, the Commission confirms that Columbia College Hollywood has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments to Student Learning and Success, Quality and Improvement, and Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Accountability and has successfully completed the review conducted under the 2103 Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review, the institution is expected to continue its progress.

Accreditation status is not granted retroactively. Institutions granted the status of accreditation must use the following statement if they wish to describe the status publicly:

Columbia College Hollywood is accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission, 985 Atlantic Avenue, #100, Alameda, CA 94501, (510) 748-9001.

The phrase “fully accredited” is to be avoided, since no partial accreditation is possible. The accredited status of a program should not be misrepresented. The accreditation granted by the WASC Senior College and University Commission refers to the quality of the institution as a whole. Because institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program at the institution, statements like “this program is accredited” or “this degree is accredited” are incorrect and misleading.

The Commission stipulates that this action encompasses the degrees offered by Columbia College Hollywood at the time of this action, as listed in the attached Consolidated List of Currently Conferred Degrees. In keeping with the WSCUC Policy on Degree Level Approval, Columbia College Hollywood is designated as having an “I” (Individual) status for each of the degree levels currently being offered. This means that all new degree programs initiated by the institution will require prior approval through WSCUC's Substantive Change process. Degree programs that have been reviewed and included under this action may be extended to other campuses of the institution without prior Substantive Change action.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of Columbia College Hollywood’s governing board in one week. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the Columbia College Hollywood website and 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 action letter will also be posted on the WASC Senior College and University Commission website. If Columbia College Hollywood wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WSCUC will post a link to that response.

As Columbia College Hollywood works on the issues cited above, 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 *2013 Handbook of Accreditation* and its institutional review processes. These expectations build on past practice and will include, for example, a focus on student success, quality improvement processes such as assessment and program review, planning, and financial sustainability. The 2013 Handbook also includes new foci: the meaning, quality, and integrity of degrees; student performance in core competencies at the time of graduation; and institutional planning responsive to changes in the context of higher education. Columbia College Hollywood will be well served to familiarize itself with the 2013 Handbook and to approach its challenges in ways that will address these expectations.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that the Columbia College Hollywood 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 feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "ME Petrisko".

Mary Ellen Petrisko
President

MEP/mam

Cc: Harold Hewitt, Jr., Commission Chair
Alan Gansberg, ALO
Patrick Zilliacus, Board Chair
Maureen A. Maloney, WSCUC Staff Liaison

Consolidated List of Currently Conferred Degrees as of June 2014

Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) – Cinema

Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) – Cinema/Television

Associate of Fine Arts (AFA) – Cinema/Television