

July 12, 2021

Dr. Carol Folt
President
University of Southern California
University Park Campus
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0012

Dear President Folt:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning the University of Southern California (USC) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting June 25, 2021. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR) Accreditation Visit to USC March 2- 5, 2021. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by USC prior to the Accreditation Visit, and the institution's June 9 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Charles "Chip" Zukoski, Provost and Senior Vice President, Andy Stott, Vice Provost, and Robin Romans, Associate Vice Provost and ALO. Your comments were very helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations. The date of this action constitutes the effective date of the institution's new status with WSCUC.

USC has faced a series of serious, multi-faceted integrity, legal, and ethical challenges in recent years that raised questions about institutional responsibilities and oversight. These difficulties resulted in changes in board governance and senior leadership, and the launch of an extensive "Culture Journey" to identify institutional values, study the alignment between actions and values, and improve procedures, policies and practices associated with the problems. The Commission appreciated learning about the concrete steps USC has undertaken to improve its institutional accountability, culture, and systems.

Actions

1. Receive the Accreditation Visit team report
2. Reaffirm accreditation for a period of ten years
3. Schedule the next reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in fall 2030 and the Accreditation Visit in spring 2031
4. Schedule an Interim Report to be submitted by November 1, 2025, to address all the requirements listed in this letter.

The Commission commends USC in particular for the following:

1. The commitment, energy, and clarity of purpose of the new USC leadership team, which is the most diverse in the history of the university, for ensuring that change continues to move forward.
2. The new governance role and structure of the Board of Trustees that has been designed to ensure greater oversight.
3. A uniform understanding throughout the institution that there is much “Culture Journey” work left to do, and that the community appears committed to doing it.
4. The alignment of the newly articulated six values into the “Trojan family” identity and robust discussions of what those values mean across the institution and in day-to-day interactions.
5. The “Inclusive Spirit” theme that is embedded and embraced broadly throughout the institution.
6. The “Convergent Spirit” theme that has a solid foundation and a strong commitment to extend and improve interdisciplinary study and new program development.
7. The degree of creativity and collaboration on the institution’s themes and the opportunity the work provided to create productive spaces for addressing the urgent accountability and transparency issues confronting the university.
8. The partnerships (both long term and emerging opportunities) that have been formed with the local Los Angeles community.

The Commission requires the institution to respond to the following issues:

1. Develop a system (beyond auditing) to record, track, measure, and sustain the effectiveness of culture change initiatives and functions across the university (including the changes in administrative operations responsible for investigating complaints and preventing and addressing misconduct) that clarifies accountability and is transparent to the entire USC community. (CFR 4.6)
2. Grow the pool of faculty understood to be leading the culture change, especially in the area of inclusion, by targeted outreach to less connected faculty so that they can be engaged in the change processes. (CFRs 3.6, 3.10)
3. To ensure that the faculty exercises effective academic leadership, clearly define and understand shared governance roles, rights and responsibilities, and work to engage faculty in the shared governance process. (CFR 3.10)
4. As efforts in inclusion evolve, pay particular attention to developmental organizational change and organizational structures. Given that the meaning and application of inclusion varies by age, generation, socioeconomic differences, nationality, and field of study, building that understanding into an inclusion framework will aid implementation and assessment. (CFRs 1.4, 4.6, 4.7)
5. Develop advising practices and technology systems for students, particularly first-generation students, with interests in convergence (interdisciplinary studies,

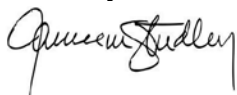
- double majors and minors) to support the university's goals of inclusion and timely degree completion. (CFR 2.12)
6. Consider whether adding more academic expertise to the Board of Trustees could amplify its effectiveness. (CFR 3.9, WSCUC Governing Board Policy, WSCUC Governing Board Policy Implementation Guide)

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirmed that USC addressed the three Core Commitments and successfully completed the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation institutional review process conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. In keeping with WSCUC values, USC should strive for ongoing improvement with adherence to all Standards of Accreditation and their associated CFRs to foster a learning environment that continuously strives for educational excellence and operational effectiveness.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter is being sent to the chair of USC's governing board. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the USC website and widely distributed 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 on the WSCUC website.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that the University of Southern California undertook in preparing for the accreditation review. WSCUC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while contributing to public accountability, and we thank you for your continued support of this process. Please contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Jamienne S. Studley
President

JSS/bgd

Cc: Phillip Doolittle, Commission Chair
Robin Romans, ALO
Rick Caruso, Board Chair
Members of the TPR Accreditation Visit team
Barbara Gross Davis, Vice President