



July 6, 2006

Eric B. Shumway
President
Brigham Young University-Hawai'i,
55-220 Kulanui Street, A152 ASB
Laie, Oahu, 96762

Dear President Shumway:

At its meeting on June 22-23, 2006, the Commission considered the report of the WASC Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) team to Brigham Young University-Hawai'i, (BYU-H) on March 15-17, 2006. The panel also had access to the report prepared by BYU-H for this visit. During their deliberations, the panel found it helpful to speak by conference call with you; Keith Roberts, Vice President for Academic Affairs; and Bill Neal, Assistant to the President. Your comments were useful in helping the panel better understand the institution's progress and challenges.

The Capacity and Preparatory Review prepared by BYU-H was framed around the four WASC Standards of Accreditation, which provided a platform for a series of insightful reflective essays. The team found the materials in this presentation, together with those provided on site, and available through the segment of BYU-H's website devoted to accreditation, to be exceptionally well organized and relevant. During the visit, the team was able to interact productively with all segments of the institution. In particular, the team noted that the mission-driven character of the University is broadly and deeply appreciated, lending a sense of purposeful coherence to all the activities of the institution.

The CPR team looked carefully into the institution's responses to issues identified by earlier WASC teams and found that BYU-H had clearly incorporated many of the Commission's prior recommendations into the fabric of the campus. In particular, the team noted the University's progress in simplifying the curriculum and shortening time-to-completion for students, and its progress toward becoming a learning-centered organization through identification and assessment of learning outcomes in all programs. These observations substantiated the team's conclusion that BYU-H has embraced WASC values and processes with consistency and enthusiasm.

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The team report also highlighted other significant achievements at BYU-H. In particular, the Commission commends the institution's commitment to the students of Pacific nations through significant financial support, attention to English language proficiency, and focus on "returnability" of students to their original cultures. This commitment also finds aligned expression in such linked areas as curricular content, learning community and dormitory arrangements, summer internships, and the institution's readiness to welcome students from an expanding list of countries—including Mongolia. The intricately interwoven relationship the University enjoys with the Polynesian Cultural Center is both visionary and highly beneficial to international students and their home cultures.

BYU-H has achieved significant breakthroughs in the move from a teaching-oriented to a learning-oriented culture. The focus on creating learning outcomes aligned with institutional mission has helped to move BYU-H away from a cafeteria-style General Education program to one in which courses and assessment are aligned around a coherent set of student learning outcomes. Students appear to be responding well to the many active-learning modalities presented by faculty. Individual course requirements also appear to be both rigorous and relevant, and at-risk students are being provided with substantial support. The Assessment Committee, through workshops and nationally recognized consultants, has been effective in building acceptance among faculty of a rigorous focus on the assessment of learning.

The University's achievements in both obtaining and using significant data must also be noted. Information from sources such as NSSE, high-response-rate alumni surveys, and both individual and program-specific performance data managed by BYU-H's data warehouse, makes evidence-based evaluation and decision making the norm in many aspects of the institution.

The Commission notes that the institution's internal decision making and leadership processes have been influenced in important ways by the norms and values of its sponsoring church. Many decisions are the product of a consensus arrived at within University councils. Deans also rotate back to the faculty on a regular basis, mitigating trends toward entrenched status and creating a sense of a shared academic, as well as faith-based community. The team found that these patterns have led to a remarkable civility and collaboration at all levels toward achieving important institutional goals.

During the institution's 50-year history at its present location, it has addressed both financial and organizational challenges. The CPR team found stable leadership that has solidified the support of the sponsoring church and won resources from many other sources. As a result, the institution shows many signs of both increased stability and optimism as it faces the future. Related strategic planning has thus centered on the allocation of substandard resources rather than on continual retrenchment. The Commission commends the institution's leaders and sponsors for this achievement that is so critical to fulfilling the University's mission.

The team report contains four Major Recommendations (Team Report, pp. 27, 28) for the institution to consider as it moves forward. These can be summarized as follows:

1. Continue to pursue solutions to the issue of scarce and expensive housing in order to support efforts to recruit and retain qualified faculty and staff.
2. Seek to bring faculty teaching loads into alignment with institutional expectations for research and creative activity linked to advancement.
3. Continue to develop strategies by which qualified women and underrepresented minorities can progress into full-time faculty and administrative roles.
4. Draw the larger campus community into the strategic plan through regular progress reports and begin development of a subsequent strategic plan since the current plan expires in 2007.

The Commission endorses these team recommendations and wishes to draw the institution's attention to several additional areas as it prepares for the Educational Effectiveness Review:

Further Developing an "Outcomes Orientation." BYU-H has made remarkable progress in embracing and developing an outcomes-based approach to its effectiveness. As efforts are undertaken to gather and analyze student achievement data from multiple sources, continued efforts should be made to draw upon both the academic and the co-curricular/student support units for data, thus confirming their shared roles in achieving institutional learning outcomes. Given the significant impact student support has on the culture of the campus, BYU-H is in a position to develop useful models from which other institutions could learn.

As the University expands its use of innovative and sophisticated assessment strategies, such as capstones and electronic portfolios, it will be important to keep the issue of "what level of learning is good enough for BYU-H?" as a key focus and to build on the significant efforts underway to work directly with student work. The work of the Assessment Committee appears to be central to the University's efforts, and continuing support for its endeavors will be needed to address program-specific, as well as general education, outcomes. The University has made considerable progress in embedding learning-centeredness and an outcomes orientation within its culture, and it is hoped that this progress will be further evidenced at the EER and beyond.

Student Success and "Returnability." BYU-H has achieved a fine record of success with its highly diverse and international student body. It has learned a great deal about how to serve and support its multinational and multilingual student population. It will be important for the University to develop a clearer set of indicators identifying the conditions and triggers for success, retention, and appropriate placement upon program completion. The University's innovative commitment to "returnability," including its focus on English language proficiency as a campus-wide responsibility and its pre-graduation strategies for linking students with home-country employment through internships and linkages with BYU-H alumni, all appear to be important elements. The Commission urges the University to develop and share additional ways to measure, and thus improve, the effectiveness of these strategies.

The Commission makes these recommendations with the awareness that they are aligned with the directions already set by the University; as such, they are designed to reinforce the University's own goals.

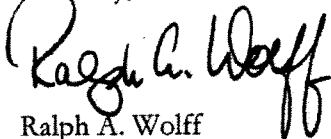
The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Capacity and Preparatory Review Report and continue the accreditation of Brigham Young University- Hawai'i.
2. Proceed with the Educational Effectiveness visit scheduled for spring 2008. The Institutional Presentation is due 12 weeks before the visit.
3. Request that the institution incorporate its response to the issues raised in this action letter and the major recommendations of the Capacity team report in its Educational Effectiveness Report. This may be done by referencing where these responses are in the Table of Contents or in an addendum to the Report.

In accordance with a recently adopted Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the Chair of the institution's governing board in one week. It is the Commission's expectation on disclosure 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 content of this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Ralph A. Wolff
President and Executive Director

RW/brn

cc: John D. Welty
Keith J. Roberts
Members of the team
Richard Winn