



**CHAIR**  
Harold Hewitt  
*Chapman University*

**VICE CHAIR**  
William Ladusaw  
*University of California, Santa Cruz*

Richard Bray  
*Schools Commission Representative*

Ronald Carter  
*Loma Linda University*

Christopher T. Cross  
*Public Member*

Jackie Donath  
*California State University, Sacramento*

John Etchemendy  
*Stanford University*

Dianne Harrison  
*California State University, Northridge*

Michael Jackson  
*University of Southern California*

Roberts Jones  
*Public Member*

Barbara Karlin  
*Golden Gate University*

Margaret Kasimatis  
*Loyola Marymount University*

Deborah Lieberman  
*University of La Verne*

Julia Lopez  
*Public Member*

Thomas McFadden  
*Community and Junior Colleges  
Representative*

Leroy Morishita  
*California State University, East Bay*

Stephen Privett, S.J.  
*University of San Francisco*

Sharon Salinger  
*University of California, Irvine*

Sheldon Schuster  
*Keck Graduate Institute*

Carmen Sigler  
*San Jose State University*

Ramon Torrecilha  
*California State University,  
Dominguez Hills*

Leah Williams  
*Public Member*

Paul Zingg  
*California State University, Chico*

**PRESIDENT**  
Ralph A. Wolff

July 10, 2013

Pete C. Menjares  
President  
Fresno Pacific University  
1717 S. Chestnut Ave.  
Fresno, CA 93702-4709

Dear President Menjares:

At its meeting June 19-21, 2013, the Commission considered the report of the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) team that conducted the visit to Fresno Pacific University (FPU) March 19-21, 2013. The Commission also reviewed the Capacity and Preparatory Report submitted by FPU prior to the visit and your response to the CPR team report, dated May 13, 2013. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with Provost Steve Varvis. His observations were very helpful in informing the commission's deliberations.

For this comprehensive review FPU chose to continue the process outlined in the *2008 Handbook of Accreditation*, which included two visits: a Capacity and Preparatory Review, and an Educational Effectiveness Review, FPU also decided to undertake two of the major new emphases in the *2103 Handbook of Accreditation*, focusing attention on critical thinking and writing. It also became part of WASC's group utilizing Lumina's Degree Qualifications Profile to study the meaning and integrity of an FPU degree. The Commission commends FPU for its initiative in undertaking these emphases in its self-review. FPU will continue to use the processes, Standards, and Criteria for Review contained in the *2008 Handbook* for the Educational Effectiveness Review in order to complete its reaccreditation cycle under the same *Handbook*.

The University focused on six themes for the Capacity and Preparatory Review: student achievement and strategic assessment, aspects of diversity, resources and financial stability, writing, critical thinking, and meaning and rigor of degree; the institutional report concluded with an integrative essay focused on inquiry into and reflection on engagement and learning. The team commended FPU for the "transparency of the report and the honest self-examination that seems to have marked the review process." The University is now very well positioned for moving to the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER), with many plans underway for addressing each theme. However, FPU identified so many recommendations for follow-up with each theme that the institution may want to use the site visit report to prioritize the areas for greatest attention leading up to the EER.

The Commission endorsed the commendations in the report and wished in particular to highlight the following:

**Inquiry Circles.** FPU appointed Inquiry Circles for each of the six themes composed of faculty, staff, and students; this enabled the University to gain campus-wide interest in each area. As the team discovered, campus-wide participation created a “culture of rigorous inquiry . . . as they employ[ed] various methodologies to acquire data and identify steps to be taken.” The Commission considers this a best practice for how a University can be organized to study issues of critical importance.

**Culture of Assessment.** The Commission commends FPU for the high level of participation by the faculty and staff in creating a culture of evidence found in the assessment of academic and co-curricular programs. The University has also increased its support of assessment through increased budgets for personnel and technological resources such as TaskStream. For example, 90% of all academic programs have completed the full development of outcomes, curriculum maps, assessment rubrics, and signature assignments. As the team observed, “This embracing of student learning in an environment of academic excellence, innovative programming, and spiritual vitality seems to be the very imprint of FPU.”

**Rigor and Meaning of the Degree.** The Commission appreciates the work carried out at FPU on using the Lumina “Degree Qualifications Profile” (DQP) to begin the conversation on the rigor and meaning of degrees being offered. The University has already demonstrated the value of having discussions centered on this topic with several important outcomes. At the EER visit, the Commission looks forward to learning how FPU’s early work using the DQP has progressed in improving educational effectiveness.

The Commission likewise endorsed the recommendations of the CPR team and wished to emphasize the following areas for continued attention and development:

**Strategic Planning.** The appointment of a new President came around the same time that the prior strategic plan was reaching the end of its timeframe. Rather than expediting creation of a new strategic plan to be finished by the time of the CPR visit, a decision was made to give the new President time to learn more about FPU’s needs and to lead in the development of the new plan, which was voted by the Board in June 2013. The Commission understands the wisdom of this decision but expects by the time of the EER visit to see the plan fully developed and implemented in keeping with its timelines. As part of the planning process, the Commission also expects to see greater internal transparency about decision-making and the creation of budgets that flow from the strategic plan. (CFRs 3.5, 4.1, 4.2)

**Culture of Assessment.** As with many of the new initiatives at FPU, the basic capacity and structure is now in place but more remains to be done in terms of analysis and synthesis of the data to determine the results which will be the focus of the EER. At the time of that review, the Commission expects to see assessment findings and use of those findings to define standards of performance and inform changes and improvements in student learning across the institution. (CFRs 2.2, 2.3, 2.4)

**Retention and Graduation Rates.** The Commission is aware that FPU has put in place aggressive plans to improve retention and graduation rates; however, it is concerned that 6-year graduation rates have declined from 63% to 50% for all students and are low for such groups as African Americans and males. At the time of the EER, the visiting team will want an update on how the University's plans to improve retention and graduation rates are progressing to ensure improvement. (CFRs 2.10, 4.6)

The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Capacity and Preparatory Review report and continue the accreditation of Fresno Pacific University.
2. Reschedule the Educational Effectiveness Review visit from fall 2014 to spring 2015.
3. Request that the institution incorporate its response to the issues raised in this action letter and to the major recommendations of the CPR team report into its Educational Effectiveness Review report. You may include this analysis in an appendix to your Educational Effectiveness Review report or incorporate it into the report.

In extending the timeframe until the Educational Effectiveness Review, the Commission hopes to provide the University with time to build upon its progress to date, so that by the time of the Educational Effectiveness Review, FPU will be able to demonstrate that many of the new initiatives already in progress will be fully implemented including a new strategic plan and analysis of the extensive collection of data in regard to academic and co-curricular programs.

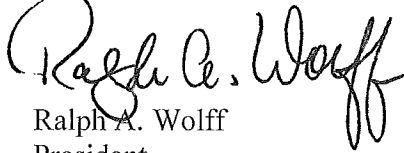
In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of Fresno Pacific University's governing board in one week. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on FPU's web site and widely disseminated throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement, and to support the institution's response to the specific issues identified in them. The team report and the action letter will also be posted on the WASC website. If FPU wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WASC will post a link to that response.

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

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that Fresno Pacific University undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WASC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while ensuring 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 that reads "Ralph A. Wolff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Ralph A. Wolff  
President

RW/gc

Cc: Harold Hewitt, Commission Chair  
Steve Varvis, ALO  
John Thiesen, Board Chair  
Members of the CPR Team  
Richard Osborn, WASC Staff Liaison