

Summary Report of Faculty Council Delegates on Meeting with WASC Higher Education Commission Staff, Friday 7/27/07

In attendance at the meeting were:

[New College:]

Jane Swan, CFA, Board of Trustees

Martin Hamilton, President

Martina Ayala, PhD, Consultant to the Board

Greg Tanaka, PhD, JD, Consultant to the Board

Francisco Leite, PhD, EdD, Board-appointed Acting CFO

Stephanie Adraktas, JD, Faculty Representative

Adam Cornford, MA, Faculty Representative, ALO

[WASC:]

Ralph Wolff, PhD, JD, Commission Staff Director

Teri Cannon, JD, Commission Staff

Following introductions, Ralph opened the proceedings by saying that he would both convey to us the views of the Commission and his own opinions as WASC staff director. I will summarize his main points.

- The search for an interim “turnaround president” to oversee the return of NC to compliance with WASC standards of institutional and academic integrity should begin immediately. Ralph made it clear that Martin staying on as long as a year was unacceptable to the Commission. He also suggested that the Board consult with Jeff Cox, President of Alliant University, who brought that school back from

Show Cause, on how to manage the process.

- The WASC process around accreditation sanctions, while the sanctions themselves are in a hierarchy of severity from Warning through Probation and Show Cause to De-accreditation, is not necessarily sequential. That is, the Commission could move directly from Probation to ending accreditation.

--The Commission will make its decision on whether or not to end New College's accreditation (and/or take the College off probation) at its regularly scheduled meeting in February 2008, based on the Team Report from the Special Visit this Fall (which will likely occur in late October or early November, at the latest soon after Thanksgiving).

--New College can then request a review of the decision. The review would be brought back to the Commission in June 2008.

--If the Commission upholds its original decision, New College can appeal and the Commission will appoint a special five-member panel of Commission members and other qualified persons to rule on the appeal within three working days.

--If the panel rejects the appeal and upholds the Commission decision, accreditation is lifted the same day. Ralph noted that the Commission is not bound by the recommendations of the appeal panel and could end accreditation anyway.

- The interim President may want to bring in her/his own Academic Vice-President (AVP), and we should be prepared for that. According to Ralph, an AVP represents the administration to the faculty, whereas Deans advocate for their faculties with the administration. He was therefore critical of the Board's notion that the AVP be in some sense elected by the faculty.
- There should be immediate searches for a new, fully trained and qualified Registrar, Admissions Director, and Financial Aid Director. Ralph recommended that the College consult AACRAO, the American Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers, which is the relevant national body. He also said that the new Registrar should be "protected" from administrative or faculty pressure to change or backdate records (such as grades or admissions) in ways that violate academic integrity, and so that s/he is able to assure the confidentiality of student records.
- On the issue of substantive change, Ralph and Teri said that staff were prepared to be convinced that the BA Humanities with emphasis in Experimental Performance was not a new BA degree, but that it appeared to them to be at present; if we chose not to argue that it was and instead file a substantive change (SC) application, we could do so. The staff would do their best to expedite the SC application, but normally they take six months; even at best it would not be approved before Fall.
- Ralph further emphasized that the "common core content" of the sole BA degree New College is

presently authorized to offer, BA Humanities, must be based on a shared definition of the Humanities and include lower and upper division requirements, domains of knowledge to be covered, definition of an area of emphasis, and so forth. He remarked that the curricula of the graduate and professional programs were not currently in question, but that they would also be examined in the future.

- Ralph proceeded to express the views of the Commission in a very forceful way. In the Commission's view, Ralph said:

- New College has betrayed the trust of the Commission, its students, and the public;

- the Board has failed in its fiduciary responsibility to an "inconceivable" degree;

- merely adding new members to the Board will not in itself restore trust (the implication being that at least most of the longer standing members should immediately step down);

- at the hearing following the emergency visit, the Commission found "inconceivable" the attitude of Martin and one Board member present (unnamed, but we were left in no doubt he meant Peter Gabel), which Ralph characterized as arrogant, defensive, and refusing to take the emergency visiting team's findings seriously;

- every system in the College has broken down;

- there has been "an incredible breakdown of integrity"

- "every action the College has taken in the last 35 years is now in question.";

- the burden of proof that we are restoring academic and institutional integrity is now on the College.

- Ralph and Teri in their capacity as Commission staff made the following additional recommendations:

- that the Board appoint an "ombudsman" and/or investigator who is empowered to receive and independently investigate complaints or allegations from any member of the College in complete confidence (this is partly to deflect the stream of individual communications of this kind currently being received by WASC staff, which they are finding overwhelming);

- that Teri work with the ALO to develop an FAQ on probation and so forth;

--that Teri also attend a community meeting at the College to answer questions in person;

--that the Board forthwith issue a “very clear” public statement indicating the seriousness of the Commission’s action and the seriousness of their present and planned response to that action.

• The calendar from here on is as follows:

8/3/07: all reports on materials demanded in the Commission letter in the hands of the consultants for internal review;

8/10/07 (a slight extension from 8/6): those materials as amended made available to WASC staff;

9/1/07: Self-Study Report for Fall special visit due at WASC:

10-11/07: Special Visit (team now being assembled, which will include at least one member from the 2006 visiting team);

2/08: Commission reviews Team report and issues decision re: accreditation status.

Ralph reiterated several times that the Commission did not expect all the problems to be fixed by the time of the visit, but that we must be seen to be “moving forward”—a phrase he also reiterated.

Respectfully submitted:

Adam Cornford, Accreditation Liaison Officer and Faculty Council Delegate

Stephanie Adraktas, Faculty Council Delegate