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PRESIDENT
Ralph A. Wolff

March 7, 2012

Lori Bettison-Varga
President
Scripps College
1030 Columbia Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711-3948

Dear President Bettison-Varga:

At its meeting February 22-24, 2012, the Commission considered the report of the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) team that conducted the visit to Scripps College September 14-16, 2011. The Commission also reviewed the Capacity and Preparatory report submitted by Scripps College prior to the visit and your response to the CPR team report, dated November 2, 2011. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and Vice President of Academic Affairs Amy Marcus-Newhall. Your observations were very useful in helping the panel understand Scripps and its work on this reaccreditation review.

Scripps College's Institutional Proposal outlined two themes for the Capacity and Preparatory Review: (1) Enhancing the Culture of Teaching and Learning and (2) Educating Women to be Agents of Change. For the first theme, Scripps used the self-study process to examine and strengthen its efforts in assessment of student learning and program review. At the time of the visit, only four of 24 academic programs had formal assessment plans and the team found that the quality of the plans "leaves some room for improvement." While the team lauded the speed with which the program review system has been put in place, it noted that the effectiveness of program review could be strengthened by including evidence from the direct assessment of student learning. (CFR 2.7) There is significant work still ahead for Scripps to address this theme for the Educational Effectiveness Review. In terms of the second theme, women as agents of change, the team expressed concerns about the breadth and ambition of this undertaking. The team recommended that the theme be framed to focus more narrowly on the assessment of co-curricular programs designed to prepare women as agents of change; the Commission supports such a reformulation of this theme.

The Commission endorses the commendations of the visiting team that are found throughout the team's report. The Commission especially commends Scripps for its careful financial stewardship, which has helped it weather the economic downturn; its thoughtfully designed and distinctive curriculum; the personal attention students receive; the strong institutional commitment to develop women's leadership; newly initiated efforts to align budget allocations with institutional priorities related to staff and programs; and the dedication of faculty, staff, board and alumnae. The team was

deeply impressed by “how individuals go beyond the requirements of their position because of their love for the College and their loyalty to it.”

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

Refining and implementing assessment and outcomes-based program review, and strengthening institutional research. Scripps is in the emerging stage of implementing comprehensive assessment and considerably more progress is needed by the time of the EER visit. The Commission expects Scripps to proceed expeditiously to complete and implement academic and co-curricular assessment plans, including developing college-wide learning goals, aligning existing course objectives to program and institutional student learning goals, and integrating findings from assessment of student learning into program review. The Commission also recommends attention to building a robust institutional research capability that can help Scripps gather, analyze and interpret data that can be used to improve educational effectiveness. (CFRs 2.3, 2.6, 2.7, 4.4, 4.5)

Strengthening diversity. The challenges of achieving greater levels of diversity within the student body, faculty and staff, noted in the March 2002 Commission letter, continue today. Scripps has been successful in recruiting a diverse staff. However, student diversity has shown little change over the last four years, and faculty diversity remains a challenge. As the team noted “progress has been slower than it might be.” The Commission urges that this area continue to be a high priority, that plans and initiatives be formulated, implemented and evaluated in a timely fashion, and that progress in campus diversity be monitored on an ongoing basis. (CFRs 1.1, 1.5, 2.10, 2.13, 3.2)

Promoting student success. Scripps’ strategic plan identifies a goal of increasing student retention and four-year graduation rates to 90%. While currently the overall six-year undergraduate graduation rate is 84%, some disparities exist by racial-ethnic group. The Commission acknowledges the work Scripps has done to analyze and track retention and graduation rates and recommends that Scripps continue to examine disaggregated data to identify performance gaps among various subpopulations, to seek to understand these disparities, and to develop and implement strategies to raise the rates in areas identified. In addition, the Commission recommends that Scripps use comparative data from other institutions to contextualize and understand its graduation and retention rates and related patterns. (CFRs 2.6, 2.10, 4.4)

Leveraging the resources of the Claremont University Consortium (CUC). As the team report notes, the Consortium offers multiple advantages for its members: additional curricular breadth, wider social opportunities for students, economies of scale in administration, a shared library, and a fuller range of services than a small college can offer. However, the potential of shared services within the Consortium has not been fully realized by its members, for example, in the areas of information technology, institutional research and student services. In addition, opportunities may exist in the areas of program review and assessment of student learning to share best practices, to gather and compare data (such as surveys of students’ experiences), to explore common data sets, to develop peer comparisons, and the like. The Commission recommends that Scripps work proactively with the other members of the Consortium to consider ways to better leverage the resources of the CUC. (CFRs 3.5-3.7, 4.1-4.4)

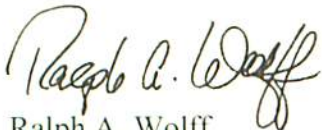
The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Capacity and Preparatory Review report and continue the accreditation of Scripps College.
2. Reschedule the Educational Effectiveness Review visit from spring 2013 to fall 2013. The Institutional Report will be due 12 weeks prior to the scheduled visit.
3. Request that the institution incorporate its response to the issues raised in this action letter and the major recommendations of the CPR team report into its Educational Effectiveness Review report. You may include this analysis in an appendix or incorporate it into the report.

In extending the time frame until the Educational Effectiveness Review, the Commission hopes to provide the institution with time to build upon its progress to date, so that by the time of the Educational Effectiveness Review, Scripps will be able to demonstrate that its graduates have met stated learning outcomes and that it has sustainable quality assurance processes that assess student learning and use the results of assessment to improve student learning (CFRs 2.6, 4.4). Scripps is expected to be able to produce findings from its assessment work and to answer critical questions both about whether students are learning what they are expected to learn, and how learning can be improved. (CFRs 4.6, 4.7)

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of Scripps' governing board in one week. The Commission expects 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. Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that the College undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WASC 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,



Ralph A. Wolff
President

RW/bgd

cc: Linda Johnsrud, Commission Chair
Amy Marcus-Newhall, ALO
Linda Davis Taylor, Board Chair
Members of the CPR team
Barbara Gross Davis, WASC