



February 27, 2007

Robert Brower  
President  
Point Loma Nazarene University  
3900 Lomaland Drive  
San Diego, CA 92106

Dear President Brower:

At its meeting on February 15-16, 2007, the Commission considered the report of the evaluation team that conducted the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) to Point Loma Nazarene University (PLNU) on October 4-6, 2006. The Commission also had access to the Capacity and Preparatory Report prepared by the University prior to the Visit. The Commission also appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you and Keith Bell, Vice Provost. Your comments were helpful.

For this review, the University conducted a comprehensive and searching self-review, closely aligned with the goals set forth in the institution's Proposal. The team commended PLNU for "its level of transparency and public self-disclosure" in the evidence provided to the team and the public. The University set forth eight goals in its Proposal, and for the CPR presentation, these were addressed through a series of seven essays, supported by an online data portfolio. The Commission commends the University for using this process so effectively for "a level of self-analysis that resulted in focused and thoughtful recommendations" for institutional improvement. There was widespread involvement with the development of the CPR presentation, and the Commission hopes that the Educational Effectiveness review process within the University will be equally successful, and will engage students as well as faculty, staff and the Board. (Criteria for Review (CFR) 4.1 and 4.3)

Since the time of the last PLNU comprehensive review, the University has grown significantly, increased the selectivity of its student body, substantially improved its physical plant, and maintained a new level of financial stability. The team found the PLNU community to be intellectually active, dynamic and engaged. The University has thoughtfully and effectively responded to issues raised in the last WASC review process dealing with planning, assessment, diversity and faculty scholarship. The University has similarly been responsive to the team recommendations from the CPR visit, developing plans and undertaking action on them. (CFRs 3.4, 3.8, 4.1, and 4.8)

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A strong foundation of learning assessment has been put into place and the team commended PLNU for the support provided to align program, institutional, and student assessment. The team stated: "They have rightly recognized the need to determine how they might interrelate the various strands of assessment, and better align program review and student learning assessment with professional or specialty accreditation where appropriate." Strategic planning is capably undertaken and has engaged the University community. Student diversity has increased and the University has developed programs in support of this diversity. (CFRs 4.1 and 4.2)

In receiving the team report, the Commission endorsed the team's recommendations. It also highlighted several issues for the University to address as well:

**Setting Priorities** The University has set for itself a number of goals through its strategic planning process and recommendations from its CPR process. It will be helpful for the University to set priorities and timelines so these can be integrated, aligned and supported. (CFRs 4.1 and 4.2)

**Improving Retention and Graduation Rates.** The data provided in the Summary Data Form, and publicly available through IPEDS, reflects an increasing retention rate but one that would appear to be lower, over six years, than expected for an institution with the residential and supportive environment provided by PLNU, and significantly below "best performers" of a similar institutional type. The University is urged to review its retention and graduation rates as part of its Educational Effectiveness Review, and not rely solely on the increasing characteristics of its student body to improve graduation rates. The University is also urged to assess retention and graduation through the use of disaggregated data – for example, in what disciplines is it most and least successful? Are graduation rates similar for all types of students? (CFRs 2.10, 4.1, 4.3, and 4.5)

**Reviewing Graduate Programs.** The evaluation team for the CPR did not appear to focus on PLNU's growing graduate and distance education programs. It recommended that the University focus not only on the infrastructure of these programs, as the team recommended, but also on the educational effectiveness of them, and ensure that assessment efforts, so effectively established for the undergraduate program, be equally as robust for these programs as well. (CFRs 4.4 and 4.5)

**Deepening and Extending Assessment.** In addition to the recommendation on assessment of graduate programs, for the Educational Effectiveness Review, the Commission encourages PLNU to deepen its assessment efforts, particularly in assessing the performance of graduates in writing, critical thinking, appreciation of diversity, and commitment to service. These efforts should involve and integrate assessment of the University's rich array of cocurricular programs as well. (CFRs 2.11, 4.4, and 4.5)

The Commission acted to:

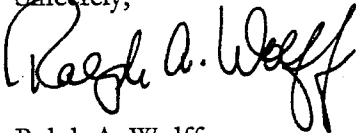
1. Receive the Capacity and Preparatory Review report and continue the accreditation of Point Loma Nazarene University.

2. Continue with the Educational Effectiveness Review in fall 2007. The Institutional Presentation is due 12 weeks prior to the review.
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 or comments about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Ralph A. Wolff  
President and Executive Director

RW/brn

cc: John D. Welty  
Board Chair  
Keith Bell  
Members of the team  
Neil Hoffman