

February 26, 2020

Ms. Liz Maw  
President  
Presidio Graduate School  
1202 Ralston Avenue, Suite 300  
San Francisco, CA 94129

Dear President Maw:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning Presidio Graduate School (PresGS) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting February 14, 2020. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Accreditation Visit to PresGS February 14, 2020. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by PresGS prior to the Offsite Review (OSR), the supplemental materials requested by the team after the OSR, and the institution's January 24, 2020 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Suzanne Farver, First Vice Chair, Board of Directors, and Dariush Rafinejad, Provost. Your comments were very helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations. The date of this action constitutes the effective date of the institution's new status with WSCUC.

### **Actions**

1. Receive the Accreditation Visit team report
2. Reaffirm accreditation for a period of six years
3. Issue a Notice of Concern because of compliance issues with WSCUC Standard 3 (CFRs 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 3.9, 3.10) and Standard 4 (CFRs 4.1, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7)
4. Schedule the next reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in spring 2025 and the Accreditation Visit in fall 2025
5. Schedule the Mid-Cycle Review to begin May 1, 2023
6. Schedule a Progress Report in fall 2020. The Commission would expect the following regarding these recommendations:
  - a. A clear Board-approved statement to the entire PresGS community that expresses a coherent plan and that demonstrates cohesion between administration and the Board. Evidence of regular updates to the community with dates of any forums convened (or any other communications sent) with clear articulation of the content and messages conveyed.
  - b. A statement of alignment (reflecting the vision the WSCUC Commission approved in 2018) or rationale for changes from that statement;
  - c. An articulation of the ways in which the current financial stabilization relates to the possibility of a long-term vision, especially with respect to the role of the faculty (and the need for intellectual leadership to design the future), the diversification of program offerings, and a long-term financial plan with appropriate data backing up the plan. Acceptable evidence would be such items as Board minutes, Board resolutions, and a strategic plan with supporting detail, clearly articulated goals, timelines, and budgets.
7. Schedule a Special Visit in spring 2021 to address compliance with Standards 3 and 4 focused on all recommendations contained in this letter.

As noted in the 2013 *Handbook of Accreditation*, a formal Notice of Concern “provides notice to an institution that, while it currently meets the Standards, it is in danger of being found out of compliance with one or more Standards if current trends continue . . . Institutions issued a formal Notice of Concern have a Special Visit within four years to assess progress. A Notice of Concern is public information and will be posted on the WSCUC website. If the Commission’s concerns are not addressed by the time of the visit, a sanction is imposed . . .”

The Commission commends PresGS in particular for the following:

1. PGS has secured a key strategic partnership to help sustain and grow the institution through its partner’s network, resources, and experience.
2. PGS is deeply committed to making a difference in the world through its values-based education on sustainability and has been able to inspire a core of engaged board members, instructors, staff, students, alumni, and partners.
3. PGS data demonstrates strong student satisfaction and retention as well as an impressively low student loan default rate.
4. PGS has enhanced its curriculum to include complex issues of social justice and diversity, equity and inclusion.
5. PGS has invested in a consulting initiative that has the potential to bring in auxiliary revenue, engage alumni, enhance its brand, and provide a source of student experiential learning projects.
6. PGS is well into its process of forming a new leadership team to ensure expertise in enrollment, marketing, and finances.

The Commission requires the institution to respond to the following issues:

1. Build alignment between the administration and the Board regarding the nature, goals, and vision for the PGS-Amity partnership. Communicate the results to faculty, staff, students and alumni through a board-approved statement. Provide regular updates and forums to keep the community apprised and engaged in the institution’s vision and direction. (CFRs 1.1, 3.7, 3.9, 4.6)
2. Ensure that the administration’s actions to stabilize PGS are in alignment with the Board’s greater long-term vision as articulated in the Change of Control documents submitted to the WSCUC Commission in 2018. Any major changes to that vision should be communicated to WSCUC in a timely and comprehensive manner. (CFRs 1.8, 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 3.9)
3. Develop and manage multi-year financial projections that are aligned with educational purpose, realistic enrollment assumptions, and core faculty development, as well as promotion and product diversification. (CFR 3.4)
4. Ensure academic quality and cohesion through strategic faculty hiring, faculty development, structured opportunities for faculty dialogue, regular direct assessment of student learning outcomes, and the formation of an Academic Affairs Board Committee. (CFRs 2.1, 2.4, 2.8, 3.10, 4.4)
5. Ensure that graduates achieve educational objectives through regular direct assessment that demonstrates achievement of standards. Create an appropriate cycle of program review. (CFRs 1.2, 2.6, 2.7, 4.1, 4.3)
6. Strategically diversify the program mix beyond the current Sustainability MBA by leveraging existing PGS curriculum and exploring synergistic program development opportunities (including those available through the Amity partnership). (CFRs 3.4, 4.6)

7. The partnership with Amity provides PGS with an opportunity available to few US academic institutions to develop a truly innovative, integrated and comprehensive international educational program. PGS should explore ways to expand PGS's impact and reputation through its partnership with Amity and in the context of Amity's network, including, but not limited to, enrollment growth, academic program development, international study, faculty exchange, team projects, and research collaboration. (CFR 4.7)

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that PresGS has addressed the three Core Commitments and has successfully completed the two-stage institutional review process conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. In keeping with WSCUC values, PresGS should strive for ongoing improvement with adherence to all Standards of Accreditation and their associated CFRs to foster a learning environment that continuously strives for educational excellence and operational effectiveness.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of PresGS's governing board. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the PresGS's website and widely distributed throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement and to support the institution's response to the specific issues identified in these documents. The team report and the Commission's action letter will also be posted on the WSCUC website. If the institution wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WSCUC will post a link to that response on the WSCUC website.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that PresGS undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WSCUC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while contributing to public accountability, and we thank you for your continued support of this process. Please contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Jamiene S. Studley  
President

JSS/rco

Cc: Reed Dasenbrock, Commission Chair  
Aseem Chauhan, Board Chair  
Suzanne Farver, Board Vice Chair  
Dariush Rafinejad, ALO  
Suzanne Farver, Board Chair  
Members of the Accreditation Visit team  
Richard Osborn, Retired Vice President, Staff Liaison at time of visit  
Susan Opp, Vice President