

July 8, 2020

Dr. Steve Stargardter
President
United States University
7675 Mission Valley Road
San Diego, CA 92108

Dear President Stargardter:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning United States University (USU) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting June 26, 2020. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Special Visit to United States University April 1-3, 2020. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by USU prior to the Special Visit and the institution's June 4, 2020 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Patricia Potter, Chair of the Board of Trustees; Ming Tan, CFO; and Scott Burrus, 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 status with WSCUC

Actions

1. Receive the Special Visit team report that focused on: (1) realistic enrollment targets based on market analysis and resource allocations necessary to sustain program quality; (2) financial performance relative to plan to ensure that realistic budgets based on accurate estimates of enrollment are developed; and (3) the implementation of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Aspen Group, Inc. (AGI) through regular assessment of the efficacy and quality of service provided.
2. Continue with the previously scheduled reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in fall 2021 and the Accreditation Visit in spring 2022

The Commission commends United States University in particular for the following:

1. Steadfast dedication to its student-centric mission through a focus on affordability, responsiveness to student needs, and attention to student success.
2. The collaborative, transparent, and collegial working relationships among the USU staff and between USU and AGI departments.
3. A commitment to an enrollment planning and budgeting process that is informed and guided by Institutional Research's work expanding state authorizations, creating a data warehouse, and tracking retention, persistence, and completion data.

4. The focus on financial sustainability through strategic enrollment growth in addition to implementing measures to operate efficiently while still continuing to provide resources needed to support students, faculty, and staff.
5. The attention given to the current pandemic crisis and how it may affect emergency contingency policies, student needs, and future enrollments.

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

1. Continue to set and evaluate realistic enrollment targets (CFR 3.4). Formally describe and document:
 - a. the process for doing so;
 - b. the role of marketing, academic leadership, institutional research, and the admissions office in setting those targets; and
 - c. regular assessment and evaluation of actual performance in meeting the targets.
2. Continue to monitor financial performance (CFR 3.4). Formally describe and document:
 - a. the annual operating plan development process (AOP), including how past performance guides and informs that process;
 - b. monthly, quarterly, and annual monitoring and reporting of financial performance relative to plan, including university-defined financial and operational KPI's; and
 - c. financial costs associated with the SLA services provided by AGI.
3. Review and amend, as appropriate, the Service Level Agreement to minimize potential risks to the institution and maximize its financial sustainability by (CFRs 1.7, 2.13, 3.5, 3.7):
 - a. clearly defining and documenting the functional services that AGI provides to USU;
 - b. establishing the methodology for determining the costs associated with those services; and
 - c. formulating and documenting a framework for how USU will regularly assess, evaluate, update, and communicate the quality and efficacy of those services that includes specific criteria for review and timelines for renegotiation.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of United States University's governing board. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the USU 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 University States University 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,



Jamienne S. Studley
President

JSS/[bgd]

Cc: Phillip Doolittle, Commission Chair
Patricia Potter, Board Chair
Members of the Special Visit team
Barbara Gross Davis, Vice President