

July 11, 2022

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 24, 2022. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Accreditation Visit to USU March 8-11, 2022. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by USU prior to the Accreditation Visit, and the institution's April 4, 2022 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Scott Burrus, Provost, and Michael La Montagne, Vice President, Finance. 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 eight years
3. Schedule the next reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in fall 2029 and the Accreditation Visit in spring 2030
4. Schedule a Special Visit in spring 2025 to address USU's progress on all six requirements.

The Commission commends USU in particular for the following:

1. The deeply held commitment and dedication of faculty and staff to student learning and success, their mission-driven ethos, and the development of a respectful and caring culture.
2. The leadership team's commitment, energy, and clarity of purpose in creating a highly collegial and collaborative culture focused on student learning and success.
3. The high level of engagement of the Board of Trustees: its thoughtful and experienced approach to addressing its responsibilities; its focus on the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion at all organizational levels; and its overall passion and dedication to the mission of USU.

4. Creation of a successful, collaborative working relationship with departments in Aspen Group, Inc. (AGI) that gives USU access to marketing, technology, and institutional research that has allowed the university to substantially grow its enrollment.
5. A significantly improved financial situation-- from deficits in 2015 to enrollment growth beginning in 2018-- resulting in budget surpluses and improvement in composite score from 1.8 in FY19 to 3.0 in FY21.
6. The innovative Office of Field Experience (OFE), with its laser focus on clinical experience, matching student interest and expectations with appropriate and practical field experiences that extends the USU culture and fosters greater student engagement and retention.
7. Its agility and resilience in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, including consistent contact with regulatory agencies and professional accreditors to ensure students' education and training experiences were uninterrupted, continuous outreach to students, faculty, and staff to maintain a sense of community, and thoughtful consideration of ways to leverage lessons learned to benefit future educational delivery models.

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

1. Continue to work on a mission-driven strategic plan that reflects careful thought about the role of each current and planned program in furthering the USU mission in a competitive and changing higher education landscape. (CFRs 1.1, 4.6, 4.7)
2. Support strategic planning with financial analyses that disaggregate data by student population and by type of program, including undergraduate programs, to better understand profitability and institutional needs. (CFRs 3.4, 4.6)
3. Continue to work with the financial aid service provider to ensure appropriate financial aid policies and compliance with Title IV requirements in light of issues identified in recurring financial aid audit findings. (CFR 1.7, Title IV Compliance Policy)
4. Acquire knowledge of co-curricular services and programs in online environments that address the needs of all students and support their personal and professional development in meaningful ways. Develop a more holistic and comprehensive model for academic and student support services that is regularly assessed. (CFRs 2.11, 2.13)
5. Continue to develop and strengthen assessment and program review processes and use the results to inform decisions regarding program viability, sustainability, improvement, and planning for growth. (CFRs 2.7, 4.1)
6. Develop a culture and infrastructure to support student and faculty success at the doctoral degree level. (CFRs 2.2b, 2.8)

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirmed that United States University addressed the three Core Commitments and successfully completed the two-stage institutional review process conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. In keeping with WSCUC values, USU 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 is being sent to the chair of USU'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 United States University undertook in preparing for the 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  
Eileen Heveron, Board Chair  
Members of the Accreditation Visit team  
Barbara Gross Davis, Vice President