



CHAIR
Linda K. Johnsrud
University of Hawaii

VICE CHAIR
Bernard Bowler
Public Member

Anna DiStefano
Felding Graduate University

James Donahue
Graduate Theological Union

Jackie Donath
California State University, Sacramento

D. Merrill Ewert
Fresno Pacific University

John Fitzpatrick
Schools Commission Representative

Harold Hewitt
Chapman University

Michael Jackson
University of Southern California

Roberts Jones
Public Member

Barbara Karlin
Golden Gate University

Margaret Kasimatis
Loyola Marymount University

Julia Lopez
Public Member

Thomas McFadden
Community and Junior Colleges Representative

Horace Mitchell
California State University, Bakersfield

Leroy Morishita
San Francisco State University

William Plater
*Indiana University –
Purdue University, Indianapolis*

Stephen Privett, S.J.
University of San Francisco

Sharon Salinger
University of California, Irvine

Sheldon Schuster
Keck Graduate Institute

Carmen Sigler
San Jose State University

Ramon Torrecilha
Hills College

Timothy White
University of California, Riverside

Michael Whyte
Azusa Pacific University

Paul Zingg
California State University, Chico

PRESIDENT
Ralph A. Wolff

March 7, 2011

Derry Connolly
President
John Paul the Great Catholic University
10174 Old Grove Road
San Diego, CA 92131

Dear President Connolly:

At its meeting on February 16-18, 2011, the Commission considered the report of the team that conducted the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) visit for candidacy to John Paul the Great Catholic University (JPG) on November 16-18, 2010. The Commission also had access to the Educational Effectiveness Review report and exhibits submitted by the University prior to the visit, the institution's January 10, 2011 response to the visiting team report, and the documents relating to the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) visit conducted in fall 2009. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you and Provost and Accreditation Liaison Officer Dominic Iocco. Your comments were helpful.

In keeping with WASC policy, John Paul the Great Catholic University took a comprehensive approach to the review process for candidacy, conducting a self-study under the Standards of Accreditation. In addition, the WASC letter of transmittal of June 10, 2009 highlighted four major issues for special attention during the interval between the CPR and EER visits:

- understanding and accepting the culture of higher education;
- understanding, initiating, and implementing a formal system of assessment linked to a system of quality assurance;
- openness to the WASC accreditation process; and
- building governance structures and developing strategic plans and quality assurance systems.

The EER team found that the University has deepened its understanding of the culture of higher education and become "much more open to peer review and the constructive criticism of the WASC process." The Commission acknowledges the team's finding that JPG also has developed greater capacity for understanding educational effectiveness and student learning. The University has increased the size of its staff, hiring a full-time chief financial officer, a development director/fundraiser, a registrar, and a full-time librarian. It likewise has demonstrated some progress on issues related to strategic planning and has "started to build the capacity to assure quality."

The Commission commends JPG for its dedication and commitment to its mission. The Commission also finds the recommendations of the EER team important and valuable and wishes to emphasize the following areas for attention and development before the time of the next WASC review.

Developing Organizational Structures and Roles. As noted in the team report, JPG has “essentially doubled its staff, faculty, enrollments, and functional programs” since the time of the CPR visit. Although the growth in staffing has reduced the number of responsibilities each staff member or administrator has, “the confusion about roles and responsibilities of staff, faculty, the board and administration remained.” The team noted, and the Commission concurs, that the clarification of roles and responsibilities must be addressed in the immediate future. In particular, the president and provost, even though involved in teaching, need to play a less prominent role in academic governance, processes and procedures so that the faculty begins to take ownership of academic affairs. Further, new and inexperienced staff members need to be trained for their professional positions and given opportunities to interact with peers in higher education through professional associations and conferences. The roles and responsibilities of the faculty, staff, administration, and governing board need to be clarified and set forth in written policies that are published in appropriate handbooks. Of utmost importance is the development of the role of the faculty to “exercise effective academic leadership” and “ensure... academic quality.” (CFR 3.11) In addition, policies, procedures, and information should be consistent in written documents and on the website, planning and communication processes need to be better developed, and some policies and procedures, as set forth in the team report, still need to be codified. (CFRs 1.3, 1.7, 1.8, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.8, 3.9, 3.11)

Embracing the Culture of Higher Education. As noted above, the team found that JPG had deepened its understanding of what it means to have a culture of higher education and that the University was much more receptive to peer review by WASC. The Commission joins the team in encouraging JPG’s involvement with professional organizations and other institutions of higher education. Such involvement will, for example, facilitate JPG’s learning about good practice and standard definitions used in gathering and reporting data. One important way to effectuate this recommendation, highlighted by the team, is for JPG to recruit individuals with higher education experience to the board, faculty and administration. The Commission notes that this matter is a trailing issue from the eligibility review and the CPR. The Commission concurs with the team’s finding that there “remains a critical need for action” in this area. Finally, gender and ethnic diversity on faculties and governing boards is also an important goal of higher education and the Commission encourages JPG to take proactive steps to bring more diversity to its faculty and governing board. (CFRs 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 3.1, 3.2, 4.4, 4.5)

Developing Assessment, Program Review and Institutional Research. The Commission notes that the team found JPG’s understanding of assessment to be dramatically improved since the Capacity and Preparatory Review, and it was encouraged to learn that many members of the faculty and administration had embraced the fundamental principles of assessment. The team also acknowledged, however, that work on assessment is still at the beginning stage and that the quality of assessment and faculty support for it is uneven across majors and in general education, with “marked difference between the enthusiasm for program review and assessment in the two undergraduate programs.” The Commission recommends that JPG continue its development in assessment to expand beyond summative assessment. JPG would also benefit from retaining an experienced institutional researcher who can help to develop the means to retain and analyze student achievement and assessment data. The Commission also recommends that the emerging program review processes be expanded to include comparative data from external sources and external reviewers, and be explicitly linked to institutional planning and budgeting. Finally academic quality assurance processes, including those for new program approval, should be defined and documented. The Commission concurs with the team that “[a]ssessment work has developed to a level sufficient for an institution entering into candidacy, but it will need ongoing effort, dedication and institutionalization” in order for JPG to meet expectations for initial accreditation. (CFRs 2.4, 2.7, 3.2, 3.4, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7)

Understanding and Adhering to WASC Policies. Institutions are found eligible to apply for candidacy with the understanding that they will not add new programs without informing and seeking approval from WASC until candidacy is granted (see WASC’s *How to Become Accredited* manual). JPG, not fully understanding this policy, added two master’s degrees during its eligibility period. Although the team examined these programs, they were started without the required review and approval from the Eligibility Review Committee. One of the basic commitments that institutions make to WASC is to abide by Commission policies and procedures. Therefore the Commission expects that JPG become familiar with WASC policies, including those relating to substantive change and annual reports, and that it establish mechanisms to ensure that the University follows these policies carefully as it enters candidacy.

In addition, JPG needs to give very careful consideration to the team’s recommendations concerning the offering of new programs. Given JPG’s size and developmental status, the Commission cautions JPG about the advisability of starting more new programs before the existing programs, including the two new master’s degrees, have been fully implemented and are well resourced, supported, and sufficiently enrolled. As noted by the team, the two new programs have placed stress “on the ability of a small faculty to teach, guide and assess its now multiple academic programs and levels.” (CFRs 1.9, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness Review report.
2. Grant Candidacy to John Paul the Great University for the normal period of four years, through February 2015.
3. Schedule the Capacity and Preparatory Review for fall 2012 and the Educational Effectiveness Review for Initial Accreditation for spring 2014. The institutional reports will be due 12 weeks before each visit.
4. Request that JPG submit applications and proposals for Substantive Change review for the two new master’s degrees started in 2010, no later than June 1, 2011. These programs will be subject to a Structural Change review because they are the first master’s degrees for JPG. The Structural Change process will include a pre-approval site visit.

In taking this action to grant candidacy, the Commission confirms that John Paul the Great Catholic University has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness at the level expected for candidacy, and has successfully completed the three-stage review for candidacy conducted under the Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review, the institution is expected to continue its progress, particularly with respect to educational effectiveness and student learning.

The Commission advises JPG that while a minimum level of compliance with the Standards and the CFRs is required for candidacy, the required level for initial accreditation is higher. As stated in *How to Become Accredited*,

The Initial Accreditation Review moves beyond a mere compliance review, considering evidence of the institution’s capacity for deep engagement with significant issues, including issues related to the institution’s educational effectiveness. The institution

demonstrates that it meets all of the Standards of Accreditation and the Core Commitments by:

1. Demonstrating that it has reviewed itself in reference to the Standards of Accreditation and the Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness.
2. Demonstrating that it meets all of the Standards at a substantial level.
3. Demonstrating its commitment to developing and sustaining Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness.
4. Demonstrating that it has successfully addressed the Criteria for Review and Guidelines identified in the action letter as being of concern at the time of the Candidacy review.
5. Having collected evidence of student learning and being able to demonstrate how it has used such evidence to support inquiry and improvement in support of educational effectiveness.

Institutions granted the status of Candidate for Accreditation must use the following statement in the *How to Become Accredited* Manual if they wish to describe that status publicly.

John Paul the Great Catholic University has been recognized as a Candidate for Accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), 985 Atlantic Avenue, #100, Alameda, CA 94501, 510.748.9001. This status is a preliminary affiliation with the Commission awarded for a maximum period of four years. Candidacy is an indication that the institution is progressing toward Accreditation. Candidacy is not Accreditation and does not ensure eventual Accreditation.

Federal law requires that the WASC address and phone number appear in your catalog.

Institutions granted Candidacy are required to:

1. Submit an Annual Report form in the format required by the Commission. This report will be sent to you electronically within a few weeks.
2. Keep the Commission informed of any significant changes or developments, especially those that require prior approval according to the Commission's Substantive Change Policy. JPG is approved to offer only the bachelor's degrees in communications media and business and is permitted to offer the MA in Biblical Theology and the MBA, subject to approval by the Substantive Change Committee. Programs are approved for offering only at the University's current location. Please consult the *Substantive Change Manual* and confer with your WASC liaison about any proposed new degree programs, off-campus sites, online offerings, and/or changes in governance or ownership to determine if these matters should be approved by WASC.

3. Pay annual dues calculated on the basis of the institution's FTE of student enrollment and prorated from the date of this action. An annual dues statement will be sent under separate cover.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of John Paul the Great Catholic University's 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 University 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 and Executive Director

RW/dh

cc: Linda Johnsrud, Commission Chair
Dominic Iocco, ALO
Deacon Frank Mercardante, Board Chair
Members of the EER team
Diane Harvey, Vice President, WASC and JPG liaison