

July 20, 2018

Elisa Stephens  
President  
Academy of Art University  
79 Montgomery Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear President Stephens:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning the Academy of Art University (AAU) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting June 28, 2018. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Special Visit to Academy of Art University March 14-16, 2018. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by Academy of Art University prior to the Special Visit and the institution's April 17, 2018 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues: Dr. Nancy Houston, Chairman of the Board; Mr. Joe Vollaro, Executive Vice President; and Dr. Cathy Corcoran, Vice President and ALO. 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 Special Visit team report that focused on
  - a) Clarifying the institutional decision-making process and providing greater transparency to all key stakeholders (CFR 3.6, 3.7)
  - b) Engaging with the whole faculty for genuine shared governance, consistent with the institutional mission and type (CFR 3.10)
  - c) Defining and codifying the faculty roles, levels, and responsibilities to foster an institutional faculty culture (CFR 3.10)
  - d) Building on the emerging institutional research function to analyze, synthesize, and use data to make evidence-based decisions (CFR 2.10)
  - e) Planning and informing strategic planning more deeply through systematic use of the IR function to make data-driven changes (CFR 4.6)
2. Remove the Formal Notice of Concern
3. Continue with the previously scheduled reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in fall 2020 and the Accreditation Visit in spring 2021
4. Schedule a Progress Report to be submitted by March 1, 2019 to address
  - a) Decision-making processes
  - b) Shared governance
  - c) Strategic planning

## **Commendations**

The Commission commends the Academy of Art University in particular for:

1. Embracing the spirit and intent of the WSCUC standards and processes which has led to improved transparency, communication, collaboration, and evidence-based planning and decision-making.
2. Discovering the importance and value of institutional data to drive decision-making and to empower stakeholders' engagement in evidenced-based planning and decision-making.
3. Engaging with all faculty in a participatory manner to develop and formalize structures and processes for genuine shared governance unique to the institutional mission and type.
4. Progressing impressively with operationalized decision-making processes that are clear and distributed to key stakeholders across the organization, most notably in the planning, deliberations, and decision-making of the Academic Steering Committee.
5. Defining, codifying, and communicating the faculty roles, levels, and responsibilities (directors, level leaders, coordinators, etc.) that are fostering an emerging and vital institutional faculty culture.

## **Recommendations**

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

- Continue the positive momentum in the areas of:
  - a) Data-driven decision-making
  - b) Faculty engagement
  - c) Transparency and collaboration.

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

Cc: Reed Dasenbrock, Commission Chair  
Cathy Corcoran, ALO  
Nancy Houston, Board Chair  
Members of the Special Visit team  
Mark Goor, Vice President