

January 27, 2020

Dr. Jody Lewen, Executive Director
Prison University Project
P.O. Box 492
San Quentin, CA 94964

Dear Dr. Lewen:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting January 15-17, 2020, reviewed the Institutional Self Evaluation Report (ISER) and evidentiary materials submitted by the Prison University Project in support of its application for Candidacy for the College Program at San Quentin.

The Commission also considered the Peer Review Team Report (Team Report) prepared by the peer review team that conducted its onsite visit to the College October 21-24, 2019. The Commission considered the spoken testimony of yourself and your colleagues Amy Jamochian, Chief Academic Officer; Kirsten Pickering, ALO; and Melanie Booth, Consultant. The Commission found these additional perspectives to be helpful.

The purpose of this review was to determine whether the College demonstrates the ability to meet all the Accreditation Standards and Commission policies, or to fully meet them within the two-year candidate period. Upon consideration of the written and oral information noted above, the Commission acted to **Grant Candidacy**.

Compliance Requirements

The Commission determined that the College must demonstrate compliance with the following Standards, as identified in the College recommendation, in order to achieve Initial Accreditation. This demonstration must be addressed in its Follow-Up Report in application for Initial Accreditation no later than October 1, 2021.

Standards I.B.2, I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.9 (Requirement 1): To achieve initial accreditation, the Commission requires the college develop a sustainable, comprehensive and systematic approach for continuous outcomes assessment, planning, and program review.

The narrative of the Team Report also includes recommendations and suggestions for improving and strengthening the institution's alignment with the Standards. These do not identify current areas of deficiency in institutional practice but, consistent with its mission to foster continuous improvement through the peer review process, the Commission encourages institutions to give serious consideration to the advice contained in the Team Report.

Next Steps

The Team Report provides details of the peer review team's findings. The guidance and recommendations contained in the Report represent the best advice of the team at the time of the visit but may not describe all that is necessary for the college to improve or to come into compliance. A final copy of the Team Report is attached.

The Commission requires that you disseminate the ISER, the Team Report, and this letter to those who were signatories of the ISER and that you make these documents available to all campus constituencies and the public by placing copies on the College website. Please note that, in response to public interest in accreditation, the Commission requires institutions to post current accreditation information on a Web page no more than one click from the institution's home page. In keeping with ACCJC policy, the Commission action will also be posted on the ACCJC website within 30 days of the date of the Commission's action.

In accordance with federal regulations, Candidacy is a formal affiliation status granted to institutions that have successfully undergone an Eligibility review as well as a comprehensive evaluation process using the Accreditation Standards, including preparation of an Institutional Self Evaluation Report and a review by a peer review team. Candidacy is granted when the institution demonstrates the ability – as it continues to develop – to fully meet all the Accreditation Standards and Commission policies within the two-year Candidate period. During Candidacy, the institution undertakes the necessary steps to reach demonstrable and complete compliance with Accreditation Standards. Candidate status may be extended for two years, for a total period not to exceed four years. Credits and degrees earned by a Candidate institution are considered to be from an accredited institution. Institutions that have achieved Candidacy status may make public representations about their relationship with the Commission. Please refer to Commission's "Policy on Representation of Accredited Status."

The next report from the College will be the Follow-Up Report¹, including your Quality Focus Essay, as part of its application for Initial Accreditation, followed by a visit from a peer review team. In close consultation with your ACCJC Staff Liaison, you are advised to move forward toward the next stage of accreditation, as described in the document, "Eligibility, Candidacy, and Initial Accreditation" (February 2018) and the "Guide to Institutional Self-Evaluation, Improvement, and Peer-Review" (January 2020), which are available on the ACCJC website. At a time determined in consultation with your liaison, a site visit will be arranged to verify the findings of the Follow-Up Report.

On behalf of the Commission, I wish to express appreciation for the diligent work and thoughtful reflection that the College Program at San Quentin undertook to prepare for this evaluation. These efforts confirm that peer review can well serve the multiple constituencies of higher education by both ensuring and encouraging institutional quality and effectiveness.

¹ Institutions preparing and submitting Midterm Reports, Follow-up Reports, and Special Reports to the Commission should review Guidelines for the Preparing Institutional Reports to the Commission, found on the ACCJC website at <https://accjc.org/publications/>

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If you have any questions about this letter or the Commission's action, please feel free to contact me or the vice president that has been assigned as liaison to your institution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Richard Winn", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Richard Winn, Ed.D.
President

RW/tl

cc: Dr. Nathan Breitling, Interim President, Patten University

Attachment