



USU Response to WASC Action Letter dated 10 July 2013

August 5, 2013

The past year has been one of institutional renewal for United States University. We have taken many actions to improve our operations and maintain the academic quality of our programs. We reported our progress to our regional accreditors in a self-study which was followed by a Special Visit in April, 2013. At its June, 2013 meeting the WASC Commission reviewed the report of the Special Visit team, as well as our response to the report, and concluded that although we had made progress, we were not at this time in compliance with all accreditation standards. The Commission changed our status to “accredited, on probation.” The probationary period will continue through June, 2015, at which time we will have completed our reaccreditation process. During the probationary period, USU remains a regionally accredited institution. The leadership of USU is fully committed to achieving compliance with all accreditation requirements, having the probationary status of our accreditation removed, and continuing to provide a quality educational experience for our students.

Although disappointed with the level of sanction imposed by the WASC Commission, I am gratified that the scheduled reaccreditation process has been retained, with additional time between the offsite review and the onsite review to permit USU the maximum available time to address the deficiencies noted in the action letter.

Immediately following the submission of our self-study for the Special Visit, USU began to address areas noted in our study as requiring attention. Since that time we have made significant progress:

- Data have been developed tracking new and total enrollment at the program level. Graduation and attrition data are also being tracked more closely. These data will inform the development of enrollment projections for the 2014 budget process.
- A faculty senate has been developed and will play a major role in academic policy development as well as program review and learning outcome assessment;
- The USU catalog has been revised, policies and procedures have been reviewed and revised;



- A process for integrating planning and budgeting is in place. The planning process began with a review of all accreditor's criteria for review (CFRs) which elaborate the four standards of accreditation. This review and the action letter recommendations will guide the development of measurable objectives in our strategic planning to assure compliance with all accreditation requirements. These objectives will, in turn, inform the development of the 2014 and future budgets. Our strategic planning began early in 2013, will formally begin in August, and will involve staff and faculty in its development and implementation.
- A mission review survey was administered to all USU staff, faculty, and board members. Based on community response a further revision of the mission statement was made. This revision has been sent to all USU constituents for review and comment.
- The USU Board of Trustees engaged in a comprehensive self-review led by a consultant from the Association of Governing Boards. As a result of this review and in response to the concerns expressed by our accrediting agency, the trustees have renewed their commitment to the University and its mission. The nominating committee of the Board is actively recruiting new members to assure that Board composition reflects the engagement and expertise needed to fulfill its responsibilities. The By-Laws of the Board have undergone extensive revision to assure that board processes and policies are consistent with WASC's Policy on Independent Governing Boards and thus with best practices for educational institutions. Board activities will continue to be reviewed for conformity to its by-laws and to accreditor policy.

USU leadership, with the assistance of all staff and faculty, will continue the work begun in late 2012 and beginning 2013.

- In the near future, faculty will play a major role in the development and implementation of academic policies, program review, and learning outcome assessment;
- Program activity will be reviewed to determine the best configuration of offerings consistent with the mission of the university;
- A system of tracking program sustainability with a viability analysis will be developed;
- All policies and procedures will be reviewed and revised as needed, with particular attention to consistency, ease of understanding, and wide dissemination.



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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

- Distance learning capacity will be increased. Students and faculty will be surveyed to determine whether our efforts have resulted in significant improvement in this area;
- A revised schedule of program review has been developed, and work is underway on outcome assessment systems and methodology.
- The process of revising USU's strategic plan has begun. A call for faculty and staff to serve on a Strategic Planning Task Force will be made in early September, 2013.

The USU community can be assured that leadership is well aware of the importance of compliance with accreditation standards for the sustainability of the University. We will devote all our efforts and apply all our resources to the task of achieving reaccreditation. I am confident that, working together, we will succeed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Timothy P. Cole".

Timothy P. Cole
President & Chief Executive Officer