



July 1, 2008

Lorne Buchman
President
Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center
747 Front Street, 3rd Floor
San Francisco, CA 04111-1920

Dear President Buchman:

At its meeting on June 18-20, 2008, the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review team that conducted a visit to Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center (Saybrook) on March 5-7, 2008. The Commission also reviewed the Educational Effectiveness Report submitted by Saybrook prior to the visit, and your response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you, Vice President of Academic Affairs Edward Cooper, and Director of Institutional Evaluation and Accreditation JoAnn McAllister. The updates and information that you provided were very helpful, indicating that Saybrook has already begun to act on the recommendations detailed below.

The Commission would like to join the team in commending you and Saybrook for the positive changes that have occurred under your leadership over the last two years, and particularly since the Special Visit in spring 2007. These include the hiring of a Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA), creation of a strategic plan, revitalization of the Board of Trustees, early successes in fundraising, and new emphases on enrollment management, responsiveness to students, and educational effectiveness.

The Educational Effectiveness Review report focused on the three themes put forward in the 2005 Institutional Proposal – the doctoral research curriculum, the Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy, and program review. The team report noted good alignment of the self-review with the Proposal, and found evidence of broad institutional participation in the preparation of the report. The Commission fully endorses the recommendations in the team report. The discussion below builds on those recommendations, and reflects the judgment of the Commission on how Saybrook may best proceed toward strengthening the institution as a whole and securing its future.

985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100
Alameda, CA 94501
PHONE: 510.748.9001
FAX: 510.748.9797
E-MAIL: wascsr@wascsenior.org
INTERNET: www.wascweb.org

CHAIR
Sherwood Lingenfelter
Fuller Theological Seminary

VICE CHAIR
Horace Mitchell
California State University, Bakersfield

Mark Bookman
American Jewish University

W. Bernard Bowler
Public Member

Jerry Dean Campbell
Claremont School of Theology

Anna DiStefano
Fielding Graduate University

James Donahue
Graduate Theological Union

Jackie Donath
California State University, Sacramento

Aimée Dorr
University of California, Los Angeles

John Eshelman
Seattle University

John Fitzpatrick
Schools Commission Representative

Laurence Gould
Public Member

Brice Harris
*Community and Junior Colleges
Commission Representative*

Linda Johnsrud
University of Hawaii

Roberts Jones
Public Member

Christina Maslach
University of California, Berkeley

Leroy Morishita
San Francisco State University

William Plater
*Indiana University -
Purdue University, Indianapolis*

Sheldon Schuster
Keck Graduate Institute

Eleanor Dantzer Siebert
Mount St. Mary's College

Carmen Sigler
San Jose State University

Larry Vanderhoef
University of California, Davis

Mary (Sue) Wesselkamper
Chaminade University of Honolulu

Michael Whyte
Azusa Pacific University

Paul Zingg
California State University, Chico

STAFF
Ralph A. Wolff
President and Executive Director

Therese A. Cannon
Executive Associate Director

Richard A. Winn
Associate Director

Barbara Wright
Associate Director

Michelle Behr
Assistant Director

Ingrid Walker
Assistant Director

Shana Antoine
Finance & Operations Manager

Prioritizing initiatives and executing the strategic plan (CFRs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5). Planning is the necessary antidote to the drift that characterized Saybrook in years past, and the team was pleased to find a strategic plan in place on this visit. While the team reports that it found Saybrook's planning document a solid "beginning framework," it also urged Saybrook's leadership to move beyond a "wish list." This appears to have begun with the definition of a set of implicit priorities and their resource implications for at least the coming year. However, the institution would benefit from an elaboration of this plan to make it more fully operational and transparent to the Saybrook community. That is, specific steps need to be laid out, milestones need to be identified, and an inclusive analysis of costs and benefits needs to be undertaken. In this way, Saybrook will be better able to assess its own progress, make course corrections when necessary, and demonstrate its success in achieving the plan.

The first two major initiatives in the strategic plan are the PsyD and Jungian Studies programs. The PsyD has been under discussion for a number of years. It was approved by WASC's Substantive Change Committee in 2005, there are 11 executive faculty members available to teach the curriculum, and there are plans to seek APA accreditation. In the case of the PsyD, in other words, it appears that capacity issues related to educational effectiveness are being addressed, although further needs may arise.

The Jungian Studies program, in contrast, is a very recent development. It receives relatively meager treatment in the strategic plan, and it is unclear what faculty or other resources will be available to develop the curriculum or support the program. The Commission was pleased to learn, during its meeting, that highly qualified students have applied to the program. However, in order to assure academic quality and financial sustainability, careful planning for both the capacity and educational effectiveness of this new program is needed. Moreover, it will be important to develop a process by which new initiatives such as this are formally incorporated into the strategic plan. Otherwise, the strategic plan will have little operational value.

Achieving financial stability (CFR 3.5, 4.2). Achieving financial stability is a key to Saybrook's long-term health and survival. In its report, the team noted a shortfall in admissions for AY 2007-08, as well as three years' worth of planned deficits, beginning in AY 2008-09. The team concluded that, while the institution remains financially fragile, the deficit is being used to fund marketing and recruitment initiatives that will benefit the institution in the long term. In the meantime, the situation is being carefully managed. In your response to the team report, you also indicated that as a result of successful fundraising, Saybrook anticipates having working capital of \$1.5M which can be used to support growth over the next two years.

These are very welcome developments. Under improved circumstances, the School is encouraged to consider a timetable for resumption of pension contributions, adjustment of faculty and staff salaries, and reinstatement of funding for faculty development.

Improving enrollment, retention, and completion rates (CFRs 1.7, 2.3, 2.4, 2.10, 2.12, 2.13, 4.5). At present, Saybrook is heavily tuition-dependent, yet the data show several years of falling enrollment and chronically weak retention and completion rates. The team report notes "graduation rates after ten, nine and eight years of only 36%, 27%, and 43% respectively," while

“withdrawal rates have been as high as 58% with some cohorts since ... the late 1990s.” Given the personal attention Saybrook commits to providing, and the heavy debt load students carry, these figures are unacceptable. They raise serious questions about the educational effectiveness of the School’s academic model and support systems. The complexity of Saybrook’s faculty structure, the “dispersed-residency blended model of study,” an enrollment policy that approaches open admissions, the cost of tuition, the dependence of students on feedback and mentoring from instructors who are more or less closely connected to the institution, along with other factors, make retention and completion a challenge for Saybrook, as well as for its students. The team was encouraged to see that improvement in these areas is a priority for you and the new VPAA, and was pleased to hear about the work of the new enrollment management committee. However, it will be important for Saybrook to demonstrate that enrollment management is a priority for the entire institution, and that there is clear improvement in retention and graduation results.

A more intentional admissions process, scholarships, and planned improvements in responsiveness to students’ needs should have a positive impact, and the Commission strongly encourages these efforts. It will also be important for Saybrook to pursue realistic enrollment goals and to have contingency plans available, should enrollments from existing and planned new programs not materialize as hoped. Retention and completion rates should be disaggregated and, if necessary, remedies for specific subpopulations should be developed to ensure that all students have a similar chance of success.

Strengthening educational effectiveness and program review (CFRs 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8). Saybrook is still just beginning to use the findings from assessment and program review to change programs and enhance student success, but the team was heartened to find that processes are in place and work is proceeding at the level of individual programs. Program-level review in general, and the Psychology program review in particular, should certainly continue. The goal of APA accreditation for the PsyD program is likely to provide an additional stimulus for program-level assessment and improvement. As the team report notes, “support should be put in place to facilitate an ongoing schedule of reviews.”

A further challenge in this area will be assessment of student learning and educational effectiveness at the *institutional* level. As the report notes, much work remains to be done in the area of coordinated institution-level data collection and analysis. This would include the tracking of students, tracking of transfers among programs, progress toward degree completion, achievement of institution-level learning outcomes, and tracking of alumni. Institution-wide conversations about such issues as students’ writing skills, effective pedagogies, or differences in proficiency expectations for PhD versus MA students, are essential for improved organizational learning and development, as well as for program- and student-level learning. Institution-level analyses will also support effective academic and strategic planning.

Clarifying roles of faculty and educational support staff (CFRs 2.8, 2.9, 2.12, 2.13, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.11, 4.2, 4.6). At present, the unconventional and complex structuring of faculty and other staff roles at Saybrook seems to fragment responsibility instead of focusing it. The new VPAA has already identified this issue as a priority to be addressed, and the Commission was

pleased to hear about plans for a new faculty handbook. This work needs to continue. As the team report argues, it is essential for faculty to take “greater ownership of the curriculum, streamlining course offerings, and considering new program proposals.” Faculty also have a central role to play in assessment, program review, strengthening of student learning, and improvement in retention and graduation rates. To support such efforts, a modicum of time and development will be necessary, along with some reorganization and redefinition of roles – not only for executive and teaching faculty but also for adjuncts, advisors, and educational support staff. In a spirit of aligning resources with priorities, Saybrook should seek ways to reward those who dedicate time and energy to such efforts.

Continued stable and capable leadership (CFRs 3.1, 3.10, 4.2, 4.6). The recent history of Saybrook, prior to your arrival, was marked by turnover and a vacuum of leadership in key positions. This, in turn, had a negative impact on the health of the institution and it impeded progress on a number of important fronts. The Commission notes that the hiring of a Vice President of Academic Affairs and an Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management and Institutional Advancement will contribute significantly to the stability of the School.

In sum, the Commission, along with the team, believes that Saybrook is on the correct trajectory and making progress, but continues to be financially fragile and in need of strong, steady leadership. The School also lags behind WASC expectations in terms of educational effectiveness efforts.

The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness team report and reaffirm the accreditation of Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center.
2. Continue the Formal Notice of Concern.
3. Schedule the CPR visit for spring 2015, with the Institutional Proposal due in spring 2013 and EER visit in fall 2016.
4. Conduct a Special Visit in spring 2012 with a focus on: 1) strategic planning (particularly prioritization of initiatives and new program development); 2) financial stability (particularly fundraising and enrollment management); 3) student retention and completion; and 4) strengthening of educational effectiveness efforts at all levels. In all cases, metrics for targets and actuals should be provided to support analyses and conclusions.

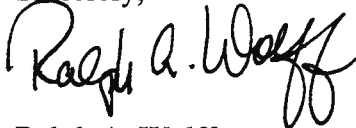
The continuation of the formal Notice of Concern reflects the Commission’s view that, while Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center has made progress and is moving in the right direction, it remains only minimally in compliance with Commission Standards and the Criteria for Review. By the time of the 2012 Special Visit, Saybrook will need to demonstrate that it has not only made continuing progress, but also has satisfactorily addressed commission concerns and is solidly in compliance with commission Standards and the Criteria for Review.

The formal Notice of Concern is not made public by the Commission. This means it is neither published in the Directory nor identified when members of the public call for information on the accreditation status of the institution.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of the institution's governing board in one week. It is the Commission's expectation 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.

Please contact me if you have any questions about the Commission's actions or the contents of this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ralph A. Wolff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "R" and "W".

Ralph A. Wolff
President and Executive Director

RW/aa

cc: Sherwood Lingenfelter
Board Chair
Edward Cooper, ALO
Members of the team
Barbara Wright