

May 2, 2016

Dr. Nathan Long
President
Saybrook University
475 14th Street
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear President Long:

At its meeting by conference call on April 26, 2016, a panel of the Interim Report Committee (IRC) convened to consider the Interim Report submitted by Saybrook University on March 8, 2016. (Saybrook received approval for a one-week extension.) The panel reviewed the Interim Report and supporting materials, the Commission letter of March 6, 2015, and the Special Visit team report dated August 25-27, 2014.

The panel appreciated the opportunity to discuss the report with you, Provost and ALO Carol Humphreys; Vice President of Enrollment Management Elizabeth O'Brien; Vice Provost Nami Kim; Acting CFO Mehul Patel; Chief Financial Officer of TCS ES Ken Maher; Dean of the College of Integrative Medicine and Health Sciences Don Moss; and Dean of the College of Social Sciences Kent Becker. The conversation was very informative and helped the panelists better understand the progress the institution has made in addressing the areas cited in the Commission letter.

The panel was very impressed with Saybrook's Interim Report: it was well written, well organized, thoughtful, and comprehensive. In particular, the panel praised the incorporation of Saybrook's strategic plan into the Interim Report which although not explicitly required, provided helpful context and background about Saybrook's efforts in enrollment management and financial sustainability. The panel also commended Saybrook for the considerable improvement that has taken place since the Special Visit in 2014: the establishment of a plan for enrollment management that includes realistic goals and addresses the importance of retention and graduation rates; the reorganization of academic programs that has transformed and streamlined Saybrook; the implementation of cost containment strategies and long term financial planning that could lead to break-even/surpluses for the current fiscal year; and the creation of the online New Student Welcome Center that successfully provides students with the resources and information they need before participating in face to face orientation.

The March 6, 2015 Commission letter identified several areas that required attention and further development by Saybrook:

1. Improving enrollment management
 - Development of an enrollment management plan
 - Establishment of achievable targets

- Analyses and explanations for discrepancies between goals and actual enrollments, if any
2. Implementing the strategic plan
 - Results of academic prioritization
 - Development of an action plan
 - Progress in meeting the goals identified in the strategic plan
 3. Strengthening financial stability
 - Cost containment
 - Deficit reduction

The Interim Report Committee noted significant progress in each of these areas.

- a. **Enrollment management.** Although enrollment goals were not met for 2014-2015, they were exceeded for 2015-1016. Saybrook's enrollment management plan wisely includes strategies for outreach, recruitment, registration, orientation, retention and graduation of students. Of particular note: Saybrook is strengthening its efforts to identify at-risk students and to provide the needed support (including a new full-time advisor) to ensure student success. The panel was pleased to hear about Saybrook's plans to undertake fine-grained analyses to better understand the variables that affect student attrition. (CFRs 2.10- 2.13, 3.4)
- b. **Strategic planning and academic prioritization.** The panel commended Saybrook for reorganizing and streamlining its academic programs into two colleges. The results have led to eliminating redundant courses among programs; coordinating required and elective courses across programs; standardizing, as much as possible, university policies and procedures; moving to larger more cost-effective class sizes; synchronizing academic calendars; and in general, creating a more cohesive academic program. The panel appreciated the report on the university's strategic plan, which has been in place for about 16 months, and which encompasses four key initiatives: alignment; growth; engagement; and academic excellence. Saybrook indicated that it is on track or ahead of schedule in meeting its goals and timeline. (CFRs 4.1, 4.3, 4.6, 4.7)
- c. **Financial stability.** Over the years, Saybrook has faced ongoing challenges in its efforts to achieve financial sustainability. Since the affiliation with TCS ES in 2014, Saybrook has strengthened its financial position: reviewed and implemented cost containment strategies; invested in a philanthropic infrastructure that could lead to larger reserves; improved faculty productivity; put in place small increases in tuition; phased out some academic programs; set realistic enrollment projections; and realigned existing resources by maximizing the TCS ES affiliation. In addition, Saybrook has made the budget process more transparent and inclusive so that academic and administrative leadership are actively engaged in the decision-making process. The panel commends the steps that have been taken and strongly recommends that Saybrook continue to be

vigilant in monitoring its financial status and take immediate action when needed to preserve its positive trajectory to financial viability. (CFR 3.4)

After discussion of the progress that has been made by Saybrook in addressing areas cited by the Commission, the panel acted to:

1. Receive the Interim Report.
2. Require no further interaction with WSCUC until the time of Saybrook's next comprehensive review (Offsite Review scheduled for fall 2017; Accreditation Visit scheduled for spring 2018).
3. Recommend that Saybrook continue to be aggressive in addressing the issues identified by the Commission, so as not to lose any momentum on its path to achieving its goals.
4. Recommend that Saybrook include in its institutional report for its comprehensive review the following:
 - a. *Update on enrollment management*: How effective is the enrollment management plan, especially on the retention and graduation of students? What changes, if any, have been made to the enrollment management plan? (CFRs 2,10, 3.4)
 - b. *Status of continued efforts to build a collaborative, cohesive university*: What steps have been taken to sustain the cohesion of the university---acting as a single entity--- so that it doesn't default to a university of silos---an assortment of individual programs and activities? How does the university work together to think institutionally to reach its common goals? (CFRs 3.6, 3.7, 3.10)

The panel, again, reaffirms the hard work and important steps that Saybrook has taken to address the issues that were the focus of the Commission letter. The Interim Report Committee looks forward to the institution's continued progress.

Please contact me if you have questions about this letter.

Sincerely,



Barbara Gross Davis, Ph.D.
Vice President

cc: Carol Humphreys, ALO
Members of the Interim Report Committee