February 1, 2016

Dr. Win Wiewel
President
Portland State University
P.O. Box 751
Portland, OR 97207-0751

Dear President Wiewel:

On behalf of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, I am pleased to report that the accreditation of Portland State University has been reaffirmed on the basis of the Fall 2015 Year Seven Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability Evaluation which was expanded to address Recommendation 2 of the Fall 2012 Year Three Peer-Evaluation Report. The Commission determined that its expectations regarding Recommendation 2 of the Fall 2012 Year Three Peer-Evaluation Report have been met.

In reaffirming accreditation, the Commission revised Recommendation 2 of the Fall 2015 Year Seven Peer-Evaluation Report. The newly revised Recommendation 2 reads as follows:

2. The Assessment Table and interviews indicated that Portland State University does not yet regularly and comprehensively assess all student program learning outcomes for undergraduate and graduate programs (Standard 4.A.3). Additionally, graduate program student learning outcomes were not published for all graduate programs (Standard 2.C.2). The Commission recommends that the assessment of student learning outcomes be systematically accelerated such that continuous improvement resulting from assessment leads to enhancement of student achievement and to a meaningful evaluation of mission fulfillment (Standards 2.C.2, 4.A.3, and 4.B).

The Commission requests that the University submit an Ad Hoc Report without a visit by May 1, 2016, to address Recommendation 1 of the Fall 2015 Year Seven Peer-Evaluation Report. The University is scheduled to submit its Year One Mission and Core Themes Report in Fall 2016. The Commission further requests that the University submit an Ad Hoc Report without a visit in Spring 2017 to address revised Recommendation 2 of the Fall 2015 Year Seven Peer-Evaluation Report. A copy of the Recommendations is enclosed for your reference.

In taking these actions, the Commission finds that revised Recommendation 2 of the Fall 2015 Year Seven Peer-Evaluation Report is an area where Portland State University is substantially in compliance with Commission criteria for accreditation, but in need of improvement.
However, the Commission determined that Recommendation 1 of the Fall 2015 Year Seven Peer-Evaluation Report does not meet the Commission’s criteria for accreditation. According to U.S. Department of Education Regulation 34 CFR 602.20 and Commission Policy, Commission Action Regarding Institutional Compliance Within Specified Period (enclosed), the Commission requires that Portland State University take appropriate action to ensure that Recommendation 1 of the Fall 2015 Year Seven Peer-Evaluation Report is addressed and resolved in the prescribed two-year period.

The Commission commends the University for its deep engagement with the community, which is central to the University’s identity as evinced notably in capstone courses and community-based research. In particular, the assessment of the capstone courses lead to course adjustment and professional development, and to continuous improvements led by the faculty in support and in alignment with the University’s learning goals. In addition, the Commission finds noteworthy the University’s use of innovative approaches to curricular development and student success, including the reThinkPSU initiative, the advising portal, and the Last Mile initiative.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes for a rewarding and fulfilling new year.

Sincerely,

Sandra E. Elman
President

SEE:tb

Enclosures:  Recommendations
Commission Policy, Commission Action Regarding Institutional Compliance
Within Specified Period

cc:  Dr. Scott Marshall, Vice Provost for Academic and Fiscal Planning
Mr. Pete Nickerson, Board Chair
1. The evaluation committee noted the absence of the required management letter (Management Discussion and Analysis – MD&A) which should accompany Portland State University’s audited financial statements per Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) requirements and NWCCU Standard 2.F.7. The evaluation committee recommends that Portland State University include the MD&A for current and future fiscal years to fully meet the standard (Standard 2.F.7).

2. The Assessment Table and interviews indicated that Portland State University does not yet regularly and comprehensively assess all student program learning outcomes for undergraduate and graduate programs (Standard 4.A.3). Additionally, graduate program student learning outcomes were not published for all graduate programs (Standard 2.C.2). The Commission recommends that the assessment of student learning outcomes be systematically accelerated such that continuous improvement resulting from assessment leads to enhancement of student achievement and to a meaningful evaluation of mission fulfillment (Standards 2.C.2, 4.A.3, and 4.B).
Commission Action Regarding Institutional Compliance Within Specified Period Policy

If the Commission determines that an institution it accredits is not in compliance with a Commission standard for accreditation or an eligibility requirement, the Commission will immediately initiate adverse action against the institution or require the institution to take appropriate action to bring itself into compliance within a time period that shall not exceed: (1) twelve months, if the longest program offered by the institution is less than one year in length; (2) eighteen months, if the longest program offered by the institution is at least one year, but less than two years, in length; or (3) two years, if the longest program offered by the institution is at least two years in length.

The Commission may extend the period for compliance noted above should it reasonably expect that, based upon the institution’s progress toward meeting the Commission’s standard for accreditation or eligibility requirement, the institution will come into full compliance within a reasonable timeframe. Should an institution deem that as a result of mitigating circumstances it is not able to comply with the standard for accreditation or eligibility requirement within the specified period of time, the institution may submit a written request to the Commission for additional time to come into compliance with the standard for accreditation or eligibility requirement. The request is to be submitted prior to the time limit for corrective action set forth by the Commission, provide a detailed explanation of the reasons why the institution cannot comply with the standard for accreditation within the designated time period, and demonstrate that the institution is making good progress in meeting the standard for accreditation. Following a review of the request, the Commission will make a determination as to whether the institution has based its request on valid reasons. If the Commission determines that the institution has substantiated good cause for not complying within the specified time period and is making good progress to come into compliance, the Commission will extend the period for achieving compliance and stipulate requirements for continuing oversight of the institution’s accreditation during the extension.

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