

March 2, 2015

Dr. Laura Trombley
President
Pitzer College
1050 N. Mills Ave.
Claremont, CA 91711

Dear President Trombley:

At its meeting by conference call on January 8, 2015, a panel of the Interim Report Committee convened to consider the Interim Report submitted by Pitzer College on November 1, 2014. The panel reviewed your Interim Report and the Commission action letter of July 5, 2011. Janet Holmgren, President Emerita, Mills College, and Chair of the CPR and EER visits, joined the panel to provide additional perspectives.

The panel appreciated the opportunity to discuss the report with you, Thomas Poon, Special Assistant to the President; Muriel Poston, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty and ALO; Omar Safie, Academic Assessment Coordinator; Harmony O'Rourke, Assistant Professor of History, Academic Planning Committee Member; and Robert Goldstein, Director of Information Technology. The conversation was informative and helped the panelists better understand your institution's challenges and progress on meeting the areas cited in the Commission's letter.

The panel initially had concerns about the struggles to get campus-wide support for various educational effectiveness concerns. However, the chair of the prior visit and WSCUC staff liaison were able to provide historical data demonstrating how far Pitzer has come in embracing expectations. Both of these individuals were impressed by the major progress since the EER visit. The panel commends Pitzer for the many infrastructure changes made in response to WSCUC recommendations. The institution has come very far, especially in the area of institutional research. The efforts to institutionalize many of the changes through updating the faculty handbook, the preparation of thoughtful rubrics and templates, and major efforts for faculty development were noted with appreciation. The reduction in time for the program review process from three to two years will help bring greater focus in a shorter but possibly more effective time frame. Administration was commended for its strong work in pushing these initiatives along within the context of a college that has been proud since its founding of a widely distributed governance model involving faculty, staff, and students. During the conference call with Pitzer, the panel appreciated the unusual openness and candor both about the progress and need for further work expressed by institutional participants.

The Commission's June 2011 action letter requested a report on five areas:

- 1. Assessment of student learning, including further expansion and refinement of student learning outcomes and systems for assessment.** The Commission urged that Pitzer move beyond promising pilot studies which had been completed by the time of the EER visit and wanted to see an expansion of assessment practices to all programs and courses to assess the achievement of all student learning outcomes. They also expected to have a full assessment system completed for both academic and student life programs with evidence of results being used to improve educational effectiveness. Pitzer has invested significantly in improving the infrastructure supporting assessment through task forces, committees, new hires, workshops, rubrics, and numerous other areas. Annual assessment reporting has improved to an 89% rate. Evidence provided shows that Pitzer understood WSCUC's concern and has begun to respond in earnest. However, most of the progress seems to be at the systems design

level and infrastructure in a top down approach which is an important first step. Now work needs to be focused on turning these important steps into a culture of evidence so that more faculty will embrace assessment as part of the institution's DNA. The panel recognizes the enormous progress this work represents but urges that further focus be placed on making these educational effectiveness emphases part of campus culture with updates expected at the next review in 2018.

- 2. Program review, including examples of recently completed program reviews.** Pitzer was expected to revise the program review process to include results of assessment of student learning. The Commission also expected the institution to complete a substantial number of reviews in field areas. The panel found that Pitzer met the recommendations through revision of the Faculty Handbook and changes in the Self-Study template to include Commission expectations. Pitzer is on schedule to have 97% of all field area program reviews completed by 2017. As mentioned earlier in this letter, the panel especially appreciated the reduction in time for the process from three to two years. On the call, the institution acknowledged that some program reviews have gone well with improvements being made as a result. Others still need further progress in seeing the importance of "closing the loop" changes being made as a result of the process with a clearer focus on student learning data in all reviews. The panel recommends that expectations for what represents good achievement be considered as part of the program review process. Pitzer will need to include evidence of further progress in meeting these recommendations in the institutional report submitted as part of the self-study process for the upcoming reaffirmation visit in 2019.
- 3. Support for institutional research development and additional analyses of graduation and retention, disaggregated by subpopulation.** The Commission asked that the institution's capacity for institutional research be strengthened through sufficient personnel and support so that retention and graduation data could be collected and analyzed among other needs. Major progress has been made with the hiring of additional staff, the separation of IR and Academic Assessment offices, the digitization of student records back to 1965, the creation of templates for curricular mapping and self-studies, the development of an institutionalized framework for assessment organized by the newly energized Office of Academic Assessment, the production of dashboards with disaggregated retention and graduation data as one of several initiatives from the Office of Institutional Research, and improved effectiveness of the Writing Center. Pitzer provided several examples of how they are using data to learn from Pitzer's successes including a laudable attempt to assess reasons for the institution's record-setting ability to produce Fulbright student winners.
- 4. Development and assessment of outcomes related to campus life.** The Commission recommended that outcomes be developed and assessed related to co-curricular programs in campus life. The institution cited efforts to assess resident advisors and mentor training, initiatives with non-traditional students known as New Resources students, and growing capacity. However, the panel found no evidence of data or outcomes of campus life. A culture of assessment does not appear to exist in this area described by the panel as being "in infancy," which is the same term used in the Commission's action letter. On the call, the institution stressed that new individuals are leading campus life who understand and appreciate the importance of outcomes assessment for this area so expect improvement. The panel urges that this area be given high priority leading up to the reaffirmation review in 2019.
- 5. Changes in the plans and culture that assure the sustainability of educational effectiveness.** The Commission was concerned about the sustainability of the many new initiatives created before the EER visit. The expectation was that Pitzer would continue to show evidence of resources, personnel, and training at a high level to maintain sustainability. Pitzer provided many evidences of building a sustainable infrastructure with a number of new and permanent staff members hired. Many individuals have also been sent to WSCUC workshops and training to receive further education in

such areas as assessment. One individual who was on the call has gone through WSCUC's Assessment Leadership Academy and gave the panel confidence that Pitzer has the expertise to follow through on many of these important initiatives. While administration and key staff members are fully committed to educational effectiveness expectations, the panel recognized the historical problem of getting more faculty buy-in which will take time. The next WSCUC visiting team will want to know the kind of progress made on sustainability with a particular focus on how widely embraced among the faculty the issues at focus in this review continue.

After discussion of the progress that has been made by Pitzer in addressing these areas, the panel acted to:

1. Receive the Interim Report with recommendations and commendations.
2. Request that at the time of the next reaffirmation review (Offsite Review scheduled in fall 2018; Accreditation Visit in spring 2019), Pitzer provide an update on progress made in recommendations cited by the panel earlier in this letter.

We want to thank you in writing for your presidency. You served on the WSCUC Commission where you made significant contributions. You have been an important higher education leader in our region. We wish you the very best in your new exciting role. The panel recognizes that much of the momentum seen in Pitzer's Interim Report came as a result of your leadership and hopes the momentum will be continued.

The panel, again, reaffirms the hard work and important steps Pitzer College has taken to address these issues. I look forward to working with you and wish you every success as you proceed toward the next stages of accreditation review.

Sincerely,



Richard Osborn
Vice President

Cc: Muriel Poston, ALO, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Students
Members of the Interim Report Committee