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**PRESIDENT**  
Mary Ellen Petrisko

March 2, 2016

Dr. Riess Potterveld  
President  
Graduate Theological Union  
2400 Ridge Road  
Berkeley, CA 94709-1212

Dear President Potterveld:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting February 17-19, 2016. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Accreditation Visit to GTU October 20-22, 2015. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by GTU prior to the Offsite Review (OSR), the supplemental materials requested by the team following the OSR, and the institution's January 29, 2016 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you and your colleagues: Arthur Holder, Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Steve Agryris, Vice President for Administration and Finance; and Kathleen Kook, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students. Your comments were very helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations. The date of this action constitutes the effective date of the institution's reaffirmation with WSCUC.

### Actions

1. Receive the Accreditation Visit team report.
2. Reaffirm the accreditation of the Graduate Theological Union for eight years.
3. Schedule the Offsite Review for spring 2023 and the Accreditation Visit for fall 2023.
4. Schedule the Mid-Cycle Review for spring 2020.
5. Schedule an Interim Report for March 1, 2019 to assess:
  - a. The status of GTUs strategic framework that identifies new partnerships and affiliates.
  - b. GTU's progress in strengthening assessment:
    - i. Establishing standards of performance for student achievement
    - ii. Incorporating analysis of student learning in future program reviews
    - iii. Aligning courses to program learning outcomes
    - iv. Providing examples of how student learning data are used for program improvement and for evidence-based decision-making
  - c. The status of the governance structure, and any current or planned changes, to meet the needs of the institution's present and future directions.

## **Commendations**

The Commission endorses the commendations cited in the team report and especially commends GTU for the following:

1. Creating a prototype of interreligious cooperation and learning that has the potential to be an innovative, creative model that, if successful, could be replicated throughout theological education.
2. Developing a new doctoral curriculum that demonstrates GTU's commitment to interdisciplinary theological research and student learning.
3. Generating genuine and widespread support among stakeholders for the institution's mission and its planned expansion as described in the new strategic framework.
4. Working effectively to protect and preserve the institution's financial resources in the midst of financial challenges and to eliminate institutional debt.
5. Preparing a thoughtful multi-year financial plan to generate new operating funds and endowment by bringing in new academic programs and philanthropic partners.
6. Moving from input analysis to outcome analysis in the assessment of student learning and using multiple modes of data collection and multiple constituencies in its assessments.

## **Recommendations**

The Commission identifies the following areas for further attention and development. Because of long-standing Commission concerns, the Commission expects GTU to address issues related to assessment and governance by the time of its interim report and to also provide an update on the status of the new strategic framework.

1. Continue to develop and institutionalize a framework and capacity for assessment, consistent with current expectations and best practices, that guides the collection, analysis, interpretation, and use of student learning data necessary for program improvement, quality assurance, and evidence-based decision making. (CFRs 2.3, 2. 4, 2.6,4.1, 4.4)
2. Strengthen program review by: aligning courses to program learning outcomes; establishing standards of performance for student achievement: including an analysis of student learning that results from annual assessments of student learning outcomes. (CFRs 2.1, 2.3, 2.7)
3. While acknowledging the effective working relationships of GTU's current trustees and member school presidents, and in keeping with the institution's expectations regarding the addition of new partners, develop a structural solution to the institution's bimodal governance challenge on a schedule that is compatible with the institution's new strategic framework. (CFR 3.9)
4. Create an operational plan that connects anticipated resource gains associated with the strategic framework with the affordability of the doctoral program for new and continuing students. (CFRs 3.4, 4.6, 4.7)

5. Develop an information technology infrastructure that supports academic offerings, advising, research, scholarship, and assessment, and that prioritizes student services consistent with the institution's educational objectives and student learning outcomes. (CFR 3.5)
6. Design a strategy to diversify the executive leadership team and faculty commensurate with the institution's development of a diverse student body, faith traditions, and commitment to interreligious and multicultural education. (CFR 1.4)

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that the Graduate Theological Union has addressed the three Core Commitments and has successfully completed the two-stage institutional review process conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review for reaffirmation, the institution is encouraged to continue its progress, particularly with respect to student learning and success.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent in one week to the chair of the board. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the GTU website and widely disseminated throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement and to support the institution's response to the specific issues identified in these documents. The team report and the Commission's action letter will also be posted on the WSCUC website. If the institution wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WSCUC will post a link to that response on the WSCUC website.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that the Graduate Theological Union undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WSCUC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while assuring public accountability, and we are grateful for your continued support of this process. Please contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Mary Ellen Petrisko  
President

cc: William Ladusaw, WSCUC Commission Chair  
Arthur Holder, Accreditation Liaison Officer  
Harold Leach, Chair of the Board of Trustees  
Members of the Accreditation Visit team  
Barbara Gross Davis, WSCUC Staff Liaison