

July 12, 2021

Elisa Stephens  
President  
Academy of Art University  
79 New Montgomery Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear President Stephens:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning Academy of Art University (AAU) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting June 25, 2021. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Accreditation Visit to Academy of Art University April 6-9, 2021. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by Academy of Art University prior to the Offsite Review (OSR), the supplemental materials requested by the team after the OSR, and the institution's June 9, 2021 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Cathy Corcoran, ALO; Nancy Houston, Board Chair; Joe Vollaro, Executive Vice President of Financial Aid/Compliance; Sue Rowley, Chief Academic Officer; and Martha Weeck, Executive Vice President of Finance. Your comments were very helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations. The date of this action constitutes the effective date of the institution's new status with WSCUC.

### **Actions**

1. Receive the Accreditation Visit team report
2. Reaffirm accreditation for a period of eight years
3. Schedule the next reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in fall 2028 and the Accreditation Visit in spring 2029
4. Schedule a Special Visit in spring 2024 to address graduation rates and implementation of:
  - a. the new strategic planning.
  - b. the new LMS.
  - c. evaluation systems for faculty, staff, and executive leaders.

The Commission commends Academy of Art University in particular for the following:

1. A stable, engaged, and highly qualified board that is invested in the mission and vision of the university.
2. Robust and engaged student support services across the student life cycle.

3. Significant progress on data driven and collaborative assessment of core competencies, learning outcomes, and co-curricular activities.
4. The selection and beginning implementation of a new LMS in response to the emerging academic community's voice.
5. Overall responsiveness to the COVID-19 pandemic, which includes adjusting expenses, leveraging technology to assist online instruction, and supporting students and faculty.

The Commission requires the institution to respond to the following issues:

1. Enhance its systems of communication to ensure the flow of information across and between the various levels of the university. (CFR 1.7)
2. Implement a strategic planning process to include a fully developed marketing and enrollment plan, an academic master plan, an infrastructure to build alignment to the budget process, and opportunities for involvement of the wider university community. (CFR 4.6)
3. Reinvigorate faculty development and training on effective teaching and learning strategies in both onsite and online modalities to meet the needs of both full-time and part-time faculty. (CFRs 3.2 & 3.3)
4. Implement a model of shared governance to include both full-time and part-time faculty with clearly articulated by-laws and roles and responsibilities. (CFRs 3.7 & 3.10)
5. Develop a formal process for employee performance evaluation including full-time and part-time faculty and senior leadership. (CFRs 2.9 & 4.3)
6. Analyze disaggregated student achievement data to identify and implement processes and support to improve graduation rates. (CFR 2.10)

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirmed that Academy of Art University addressed the three Core Commitments and successfully completed the two-stage institutional review process conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. In keeping with WSCUC values, Academy of Art University should strive for ongoing improvement with adherence to all Standards of Accreditation and their associated CFRs to foster a learning environment that continuously strives for educational excellence and operational effectiveness.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter is being sent to the chair of Academy of Art University's governing board. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the Academy of Art University's website and widely distributed 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 Academy of Art University undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WSCUC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while contributing to public accountability, and we thank you 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,



Jamienne S. Studley  
President

JSS/mbg

Cc: Phillip Doolittle, Commission Chair  
Cathy Corcoran, ALO  
Nancy Houston, Board Chair  
Members of the Accreditation Visit team  
Mark B. Goor, Vice President