

July 18, 2024

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 on June 28, 2024. At that meeting the Commission placed Academy of Art University on Formal Notice of Concern. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Special Visit to AAU on March 20 - 22, 2024 using the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by AAU prior to the Special Visit and the institution's May 22, 2024 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Nancy Houston, Chair, Board of Directors; Chris Visslaili, Chief of Staff; and Cathy Corcoran, EdD, Vice President of Accreditation Compliance and ALO. Your comments were very helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations. The date of this action constitutes the effective date of the institution's status with WSCUC.

#### **Actions**

1. Receive the Special Visit team report
2. Issue a Formal Notice of Concern
3. Schedule a Special Visit in fall 2025 to address CFRs 2.10, 4.3, and 4.6
4. Continue with previously scheduled reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in fall 2028 and the Accreditation Visit in spring 2029

#### **Commendations**

The Commission commends the institution for:

1. Establishing an inclusive process to develop and inform the strategic plan.
2. Implementing changes that improve timely response to student grievances.

#### **Notice of Concern**

A Formal Notice of Concern provides notice to the institution that, while it currently meets WSCUC Standards, it is in danger of being found out of compliance with one or more Standards if current trends or findings continue. Institutions issued a Formal Notice of Concern are scheduled for a Special Visit. If the issues are not addressed, a sanction could be imposed as described in the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation. A Formal Notice of Concern is public information and will be posted on the WSCUC website.

#### **Standards at Risk of Non-Compliance and Requiring a Response**

Academy of Art University is in danger of being found out of compliance with Standard 2, CFR 2.10, and Standard 4, CFRs 4.3 and 4.6. AAU has recently put processes and personnel in place to address persistent low

graduation and 8-year outcome rates; however, there is no evidence that such interventions are integrated throughout the institution and are part of institutional reflection and planning processes that will support improved student success. Institutions issued a Formal Notice of Concern are scheduled for a Special Visit within four years. If the issues are not remedied a sanction could be imposed as described in the Handbook of Accreditation. A Formal Notice of Concern is public information and will be posted on the WSCUC website.

### **Areas for Development**

The Commission requires the institution to respond to the following areas for development:

1. Collect and analyze student success data disaggregated by appropriate categories including demographics, degree levels, financial aid, and Pell status. (CFR 2.10)
2. Develop and implement a plan to improve retention and graduation rates that is informed by student success data and aligned with the strategic plan. (CFRs 2.10, 4.3, and 4.6)
3. Demonstrate that student outcomes data are regularly and systematically disseminated, analyzed, interpreted, and applied to improve student success. (CFRs 2.10, 4.3, 4.6)

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 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,



Jamiene S. Studley  
President

JSS/sbh

Cc: Tracy Poon Tambascia, Commission Chair  
Cathy F. Corcoran, ALO  
Nancy Houston, Board Chair  
Members of the Special Visit Team  
Mark B. Goor, Vice President  
Stephanie Huie, Vice President (Visit Liaison)