

March 6, 2024

Dr. Uriah Kim  
President  
Graduate Theological Union  
2400 Ridge Road  
Berkeley, CA 94709-1212

Dear President Kim:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning Graduate Theological Union (GTU) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting Friday, February 16, 2024. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Accreditation Visit to GTU October 3-6, 2023, using the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. 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 after the OSR, and the institution's December 12, 2023, response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Jennifer Davidson, Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Mike Cairns, Chief Financial Officer; and Arthur Holder, Professor of Christian Spirituality and Accreditation Liaison Officer. 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 six years
3. Issue a Formal Notice of Concern
4. Schedule the next reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in spring 2029 and the Accreditation Visit in fall 2029
5. Schedule a Special Visit in spring 2025 to address the Standard at risk for noncompliance and all of the areas for development cited in this letter
6. Schedule a Progress Report to be submitted by November 1, 2024, to address GTU's financial status:
  - a. A plan and timeline to put GTU on an immediate path toward financial health and sustainability incorporating key financial and operational metrics for tracking progress.
  - b. A detailed, realistic, multi-year enrollment, operating and budget plan that aims for annual positive net income, incorporates sound endowment management, and outlines key underlying assumptions.

### **Commendations**

The Commission commends the institution for:

1. Staff and faculty's deep commitment and respect toward each other and GTU's students.
2. The dedication, loyalty, and creativity exhibited by faculty and staff.
3. The candor, thoughtfulness, and sincerity of those interviewed during the reaffirmation visit.
4. The impressive development of a formal assessment process, which includes the implementation of an electronic assessment management platform, regular reporting of results, and annual assessment training to enhance teaching and learning.
5. The reduction in time to degree for both the MA and PhD programs through curricular changes informed by student feedback and assessment findings.
6. Significant and meaningful progress towards ensuring the independence of the governing board by revamping the board bylaws and board membership requirements, as well as revising the agreement among consortium members.

### **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 in noncompliance 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 2913 Handbook of Accreditation. A Formal Notice of Concern is public information and will be posted on the WSCUC website.

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

Although GTU is currently in compliance with Standard 3, if current trends continue, GTU may be at risk of non-compliance with CFR 3.4. As a result, the Commission requires the institution to develop a detailed, realistic, multi-year operating and budget plan that annually generates a positive net income, reflects prudent endowment management, and identifies underlying assumptions. (CFR 3.4)

### **Areas for Development**

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

1. Promptly initiate a thorough self-identity study addressing questions raised during the reaffirmation visit: What is GTU's current aspiration—what does it wish to be at this time? How does GTU function as a member institution within the GTU consortium? How does GTU operate as the central hub of the GTU consortium? Consider the current prevailing challenges in post-pandemic theological education and the distinctive context of consortium participation. (CFRs 1.1, 4.7)
2. Develop a planning framework to harness the creativity, passion, and commitment of faculty and non-executive staff for devising strategies and detailed plans with timelines, ensuring GTU's financial health and sustainability, while including financial and operating metrics to measure progress. (CFRs 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 4.6)
3. Regularly generate management reports that track progress on strategic initiatives, operational plans, and financial results, incorporating key operating and financial metrics aligned with specific goals, and establish a systematic review process to ensure accountability in achieving important institutional objectives. (CFRs 3.4, 3.6)

4. Evaluate and enhance leadership communication with faculty and staff concerning decision-making processes, resource allocation, and the institution's current financial challenges. (CFRs 3.7, 4.6)
5. Ensure that the board of trustees independently develops clear and measurable criteria for evaluating the performance of the chief executive officer. (CFR 3.9)
6. Implement appropriate diagnostic tools to assess the campus environment and use the results to enhance academic and co-curricular experiences, as well as foster unity within both physical and virtual campus communities for faculty, staff, and students. (CFR 4.3)

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirmed that the Graduate Theological Union completed the two-stage institutional review process conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. In keeping with WSCUC values, GTU 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 GTU's governing board. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on GTU'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 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 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/bgd

Cc: Tracy Poon Tambascia, Commission Chair  
Arthur Holder, ALO  
William Glenn, Board Chair  
Members of the Accreditation Visit Team  
Barbara Gross Davis, Vice President