

March 9, 2018

Ms. Margot Doucette, Esq.  
Chief Executive Officer  
Design Institute of San Diego  
8555 Commerce Ave.  
San Diego, CA 92121

Dear Ms. Doucette:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning Design Institute of San Diego (DISD) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting February 14-16, 2018. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 to DISD September 12-14, 2017. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by DISD prior to the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 and the institution's January 23, 2018 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues: Dennis Doucette, Chief Financial Officer; Robert Wright, Board Chair; and Natalie Worden, Program Director. 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 Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 team report
2. Grant Initial Accreditation for a period of six years
3. Schedule the reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in spring 2023 and the Accreditation Visit in fall 2023
4. Schedule the Mid-Cycle Review for May 1, 2021
5. Schedule a Special Visit in spring 2020 to address the recommendations in this letter

### **Commendations**

The Commission commends DISD in particular for the following:

1. The overt and pervasive passion throughout the institution for serving students first.
2. The quality of documentation and presentation of evidence, including the formalization of policies and practices.
3. The responsiveness to the Eligibility Review Committee recommendations and its embrace of WSCUC processes.
4. The independence, diverse qualifications, and quality of the Board of Directors.
5. The commitment and engagement of all faculty and staff throughout the process of seeking initial WSCUC accreditation.
6. The attention to student outcomes, including pre-graduation professional experiences, the placement of graduates, and extremely low cohort default rate.

7. The broad-based, inclusive, and transparent strategic planning process and the impact of that process that is already evident.

### **Recommendations**

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

1. Continue to develop capacity and invest in talent for the collection, analysis, and use of data to support key operational metrics, student success, and evidence-based decision making across all areas of the institution. This includes the further development of capacity for institutional research and student learning outcomes assessment. (CFRs 4.1 and 4.2)
2. Further develop and implement a comprehensive, scalable institutional technology strategy (CFRs 1.7, 3.5, and 3.7)
3. Continue to develop a comprehensive human resources strategy, including an appropriate faculty and staffing plan, to ensure risk mitigation, succession planning, and sustainable organizational structure. (CFRs 3.7 and 3.8)
4. In the context of the Marketing and Enrollment Plan, undertake a comprehensive market analysis and scenario planning for each identified new program opportunity to determine its viability and probability for success. (CFRs 2.2b, 3.4, 3.7, and 4.7)
5. Review the potential changes to organizational structure, policy, and culture that could result from dramatic enrollment growth or the addition of graduate programs. (CFRs 1.7, 2.2b, 4.6, and 4.7)

In taking this action to grant Initial Accreditation, the Commission confirms that Design Institute of San Diego has addressed the three Core Commitments and has successfully completed the institutional review process for Initial Accreditation 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.

Accreditation status is not granted retroactively. Design Institute of San Diego must use the following statement if it wishes to describe its accreditation status publicly:

*Design Institute of San Diego is accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), 985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100, Alameda, CA 94501, 510.748.9001.*

The accredited status of a program should not be misrepresented. The accreditation granted by WSCUC refers to the quality of the institution as a whole. Because institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program at the institution, statements such as “this program is accredited” or “this degree is accredited” are incorrect and misleading. The phrase “fully accredited” is also to be avoided, since no partial accreditation is possible.

The Commission stipulates that this action encompasses the BFA in Interior Design offered by Design Institute of San Diego at the time of this action. Any proposed new

degree programs, off-campus sites, online offerings, and/or changes in governance or ownership require review and approval through the Substantive Change process. Offerings at new locations may need to go through Substantive Change approval, in accordance with the requirements stated in the Substantive Change manual.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of Design Institute of San Diego's governing board in one week. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the Design Institute of San Diego 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 Design Institute of San Diego 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/do

Cc: Reed Dasenbrock, Commission Chair  
Robert Wright, Board Chair  
Members of the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 team  
Richard Osborn, Vice President