



OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

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Dear Colleagues,

As you may be aware, the first draft of the NWCCU's new Standards lacked appropriate language concerning Academic Freedom and Governance. Thanks to the diligence of a number of groups including our Faculty Senate and many others, appropriate language will be incorporated in the 2nd draft. The Statewide Provosts Council consisting of the Provosts from the seven four-year public institutions also responded collectively to this issue. I have added that document and the calendar for Northwest Standards revision timeline. Note that a Call for Comment Period on the 2nd Draft of Revised Standards will occur in July 2019. Once details of this period are available, they will be shared out.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gary Kuleck".

Gary Kuleck, PhD
Provost and VP for Academic Affairs,
Accreditation Liaison Officer

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
8060 165th Avenue NE, Ste. 100
Redmond, WA 98052

April 15, 2019

Dear President Ramaswamy,

The Statewide Provosts Council (SPC) of the public universities of the state of Oregon welcomes NWCCU's current efforts to revise the Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation. SPC recognizes the challenges involved in creating standards that "must be able to respond to diverse institutions facing unique sets of circumstances, and at the same time provide clarity around compliance and an opportunity for continual improvement and self-reflection" (NWCCU white paper on Standards and Eligibility Requirements Revision). We are pleased to see that NWCCU is proposing to take a risk-based approach to accreditation that offers alternative pathways, "with the goal of focusing accreditation visits and self-studies around the specific needs of individual institutions" (NWCCU white paper on Standards and Eligibility Requirements Revision).

We are also grateful that NWCCU has made the determination that the next draft of the revised standards will include language on academic freedom and governance. The current draft of standards places an appropriately strong emphasis on student learning and achievement. However, the omission of academic freedom was troublesome as it is a fundamental principle of higher education.

As described by the U.S. Department of Education (ED): "to ensure a basic level of quality, the practice of accreditation arose in the United States as a means of conducting nongovernmental, peer evaluation of educational institutions and programs." ED goes on to explain that, "with the passage of the HEA in 1965, Congress expanded accreditors' role by entrusting them with ensuring academic quality of the educational institutions at which federal student aid funds may be used subject to oversight by the federal government through the recognition process." As such, accreditation plays an incredibly important role in determining the basis of institutional eligibility to participate in grant programs under the Higher Education Act (e.g., Title III – Institutional Aid, Title IV – Student Assistance). However, consistent with the original intent of accreditation, it also serves as an assurance of academic quality more broadly. For example, accreditation is also used by federal agencies, beyond ED, as a minimum eligibility requirement for grants that go to institutions of higher education. Our faculty apply for many federal grants as a part of their professional and research responsibilities in their academic disciplines. Faculty must have freedom to determine the areas of focus in the grants. It is thus appropriate that academic freedom is recognized in the standards themselves.

We thank you for your ongoing work on these matters and look forward to assisting with further refinement of the proposed standards and eligibility requirements.

Sincerely,

Oregon Statewide Provost Council



Sarah Witte
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
Eastern Oregon University
Sincerely,



Elena Andresen
Executive Vice President and Provost
Oregon Health and Science University



Gary Kuleck
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Oregon Institute of Technology



Edward Feser
Provost and Executive Vice President
Oregon State University



Susan Jeffords
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Portland State University



Susan Walsh
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Southern Oregon University

Jayanth R. Banavar

Jayanth Banavar
Provost and Senior Vice President
University of Oregon

Rob Winningham

Rob Winningham
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Western Oregon University

Activity	Date(s)
Public Call for Comment Period (Via Confidential Survey)	September 1, 2018 through December 1, 2018
Alaska Town Hall – University of Alaska-Fairbanks	September 24, 2018
Montana Town Hall – University of Montana-Missoula	September 25, 2018
Idaho Town Hall – Boise State University	September 28, 2018
Nevada Town Hall – UNLV	November 5, 2018
Oregon Town Hall – Portland State	November 6, 2018
Utah Town Hall – Brigham Young University	November 7, 2018
Annual Meeting and Listening Session -Seattle, Washington	November 14, 2018
Online Town Halls	December 2018
Discussion and Action by the Bylaws, Standards, and Policies Committee	December 2018
Discussion and Action by the Board of Commissioners	January 2019
Issuance of First Draft	February 2019
Call for Comment Period on First Draft of Revised Standards (Via Confidential Survey)	February through March 2019
Online Regional Town Halls	February 2019
Revisions by the Bylaws, Standards, and Policies Committee	April 2019
Final Recommendation to the Board of Commissioners	June 2019
Call for Comment Period on Second Draft of Revised Standards (Via Confidential Survey)	July 2019
Electronic Vote to Adopt Standards of the Board of Commissioners	August 2019
Vote of the NWCCU Membership	August 2019
Training and Orientation on Revised Standards	September through October 2019
Implementation of Revised Standards, Policies and Processes	January 2020