WASC Senior College and University Commission

In accordance with Title 5, California Code of Regulations (5, CCR) section 71105.5, *Sample University* presents its Accreditation Plan to the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education.

Sample University Plan

5, CCR section 71105.5 (b)(1): Sample University has identified **WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) as its accreditation agency.**

5, CCR section 71105.5 (b)(2): WSCUC's Eligibility Criteria

WSCUC has 16 Criteria to achieve Eligibility before site visits begin to achieve Preaccreditation (defined as Candidacy by WSCUC) and Initial Accreditation. Panelists from the WSCUC Eligibility Review Committee review the institution's evidence of compliance with the criteria in order to grant Eligibility. Full information with more details about each Criterion is published in the *How to Become Accredited Procedures Manual for Eligibility, Preaccreditation (Candidacy) and Initial Accreditation in* Appendix A which can be found at: http://www.wascsenior.org/resources/eligibility

SECTION ONE: INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Criterion 1. Authority
The institution is authorized to operate as an educational institution and to award degrees by the appropriate governmental organization or agency as required by each of the jurisdictions or regions in which it operates. For private institutions incorporated in California, the institution shall have completed formal state approval process through the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE); temporary approval will not be accepted. Because of the current backlog of approvals by BPPE, ERC panels can recommend Eligibility on condition that state approval is acquired prior to Initial Accreditation. For law schools in California, the institution shall also demonstrate that it is accredited by the California State Bar Association. Institutions offering online law degrees, which are not eligible for accreditation by the State Bar of California Committee of Bar Examiners, may be considered for eligibility provided they are deemed to have met all other WSCUC Eligibility Criteria.

Institutions operating entirely in an online modality, with students enrolled without regard to geographical location, are expected to be incorporated or otherwise legally constituted within the region and have their primary executive offices in the region, including operational functions (executive offices, student records, board minutes, support staff, etc.)

If the applicant is part of a larger system or organization, the entity that WSCUC would accredit must meet these location requirements.

Criterion 2. Operational Status
It must be clear that institutional planning and resources are sufficiently mature to ensure that by the time of the first review for Initial Accreditation, the institution will be operational with students actively pursuing its degree program(s) and will have graduated its first class.

Criterion 3. Public Information
The institution publishes in its catalog, or in other appropriate places, accurate and current information that describes its purposes and objectives, admission requirements and procedures, financial aid policies and

procedures, rules and regulations directly affecting students, programs and courses, degrees offered and the degree requirements, costs and refund policies, formal and informal grievance procedures, academic credentials of faculty and administrators, and other items relative to students' attending the institution or withdrawing from it.

Criterion 4. Relations with the Accrediting Commission

The governing board provides a formal statement as part of its Eligibility Application that the institution agrees to adhere to these Eligibility Criteria, describes itself in identical terms to all of its accrediting agencies, promptly communicates any changes in its status, and discloses any and all information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities. Such information includes actions taken by governmental bodies and other accrediting agencies, including investigations, reports, and legal actions taken by or against the institution. Further, the institution agrees that in pursuing Candidacy and Initial Accreditation, it is committed to abiding by the Standards, Policies, and Procedures established by WSCUC.

Criterion 5. Academic and Transfer Credit

The institution awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices in degree-granting institutions of higher education. In awarding credit, the institution adheres to federal guidelines consistent with WSCUC's *Credit Hour Policy* (available on the WSCUC website).

If the institution accepts transfer students, it has established policies for the review and acceptance of transfer credits consistent with WSCUC's *Transfer of Credit Policy* (available on the WSCUC website).

SECTION TWO: INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND PLANNING

Criterion 6. Mission and Principle Policies

The institution's purposes are clearly defined and appropriate for higher education. They are formally adopted by the governing board and published in key institutional documents. Published statements reflect the institution's commitment to achieving student learning.
The institution offers academic programs and administrative support consistent with its purposes, and ensures a climate of openness and academic freedom.

Criterion 7. Governance and Administration

An institution must demonstrate that the primary locus of its governance and operational oversight activity is based within the WSCUC region, including that the institution is a legally recognized organization that envisions a long and stable future. This is particularly relevant if the institution will seek to obtain access to federal financial assistance upon attaining WSCUC accreditation. Additionally, the institution is effectively independent of its owners or investors. Institutions should refer to WSCUC's *Independent Governing Board Policy* for WASC's expectations about governing board structures, characteristics and best practices (available on the WSCUC website). The following represent key aspects of the policy:

- Interactions with ownership and governance entities are free from interests that could compromise the institution's mission.
- The institution has a chief executive officer who is appointed and evaluated by the governing board and whose full-time or primary responsibility is to the institution.
- The institution has a chief financial officer whose full-time or primary responsibility is to the institution, and sufficient staff with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to conduct and support its affairs and the achievement of its purposes.

Criterion 8. Financial Resources and Accountability

The institution documents a viable funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to support its purposes and educational programs and to ensure financial stability. It is expected that an operating institution not show a cumulative operating deficit for the current and preceding two years, or since its inception if less than two years old. If the institution shows a deficit, the institution must explain the reasons for the deficit, demonstrate that it has the resources to ensure its financial viability, and present a plan to restore a fiscally healthy state.

The institution annually undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a certified public accountant or an audit by an appropriate public agency. The institution shall submit a copy of each of the two most recent audited financial statements and management letters (if any). The audit must (1) be prepared by an outside certified public accountant that has no other relationship to the institution; (2) be certified and any exceptions explained; and (3) specify whether any capital or operational funds have been provided by employees or Board members of the organization and describe any conditions related to such provisions.

Criterion 9. Institutional Planning

The institution provides evidence of basic planning for the development of the institution, which identifies and integrates plans for academic personnel, learning resources, facilities, and financial development. The institution also has established procedures for program and/or unit review, including methods for assessing student learning and the attainment of educational goals, and for using the data obtained from institutional research to support planning for institutional improvement.

SECTION THREE: EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT SUCCESS

Criterion 10. Degree Programs

Substantial portions of the institution's educational offerings are programs that lead to degrees, and significant proportions of its students are enrolled in the degree programs. The institution's degree programs are congruent with its purposes, are based on recognized higher education fields of study, are of sufficient content and length, and are conducted at levels of quality and rigor appropriate to the degrees offered. At least one degree program must lead to the baccalaureate degree or higher. Institutions seeking to offer graduate degrees must be able to demonstrate that they have an appropriate graduate-level academic culture or have plans to develop a graduate culture. Relevant factors include faculty qualifications and workload, research support, access to library and other research facilities, and explicitly stated thesis or dissertation requirements.

Criterion 11. Educational Objectives and Assessment of Student Learning

The institution clearly defines and publishes educational objectives for each program, including expected student learning outcomes, and identifies how these objectives and outcomes will be addressed within the curriculum. Strategies for assessing students' achievement of these educational objectives, including direct assessment of student learning, are also established.

The institution actively engages in, or has a plan in place to systematically engage in, the evaluation of how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes related to student learning and educational effectiveness.

Criterion 12. General Education

The institution defines and incorporates into all of its undergraduate degree programs a substantial component of general education, including for baccalaureate degrees both lower- and upper-division offerings, designed to ensure basic collegiate skills, breadth of knowledge, and the structures of intellectual

inquiry. Educational objectives for the general education program, which include student learning outcomes, are periodically reviewed and revised with faculty involvement, and include demonstrated competence in writing, critical thinking, scientific literacy, computational skills, and an introduction to the broad domains of knowledge. Degree credit for general education programs should be consistent with levels of quality and rigor appropriate to higher education. Institutions implementing a baccalaureate degree-completion model, inverted curriculum (in which career-related courses are completed first, with general education courses being taken in the final years), or other curricular format that relies on students transferring significant portions of general education from other institutions, must describe the criteria or overall philosophy of general education by which it determines which general education credits it will accept from other institutions toward its baccalaureate degrees.

Criterion 13. Faculty
The institution has a substantial core of qualified faculty, sufficient in size, background, and experience to support all of the institution's educational program offerings, including a core of faculty whose primary responsibility is to the institution. A clear statement of faculty responsibilities must exist, which include the development and review of the curriculum, and assessment of student learning at multiple levels.

Criterion 14. Student Success
The institution has a clearly articulated commitment to the success of its students. Student services are aligned with that commitment and demonstrated by data on student learning, persistence, and development.

Criterion 15. Admissions
The institution has adopted and adheres to admission policies consistent with its purposes that specify the qualifications of students that are appropriate to the degree levels offered.

Criterion 16. Information and Learning Resources
The institution holds or otherwise provides long-term access to sufficient information and learning resources to support its purposes and all of its educational programs. To supplement resources beyond the core library of the institution, there may be specific long-term written arrangements for student access to off-campus or electronic resources. Programs are in place to train students in the use of library and other information resources, and to develop information literacy skills. The institution must demonstrate that library and learning resource use is a fundamental part of all its curricula, and that the faculty is involved in ensuring such use.

5, CCR section 71105.5 (b)(3): WSCUC's Minimum Requirements

The Institution submits evidence through a self-study process resulting in an institutional report demonstrating minimal or substantial compliance with WSCUC's four Standards. The Criteria for Review (CFR) under each Standard forms a basis for determining the level of overall compliance with the Standard. After a site visit, a WSCUC peer team evaluates the institution's level of compliance with the overall Standard with a final determination by the WSCUC Commission.

Minimal compliance is required to achieve Candidacy and substantial compliance to achieve Initial Accreditation.

The WSCUC Commission defines minimal and substantial as follows:

MINIMAL:
- Evidence of understanding the principles or intentions of each of the four WSCUC Standards at a sufficient level to support continued development
- Elementary or initial development and implementation of structures, processes, and forms that operationalize the Standards as carried out through the CFRs
- Understanding of concepts held by key leaders but less well understood at all levels of the organization

SUBSTANTIAL:
- The core concept or intent of the Standard is understood and articulated clearly as it applies to relevant operations
- Thorough and widespread implementation of structures, processes, and forms that operationalize the Standards as carried out through the CFRs
- Understanding of concepts is held at multiple relevant organizational levels

2013 STANDARDS AT A GLANCE

Note: Standards at a Glance is a much abbreviated, "quick view" version of the Standards and Criteria for Review contained in the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation Revised. It does not address all points under each CFR or include important guidelines or policies. Institutions should use the full Standards, CFRs, guidelines, and policies. The full version can be found as the *Quick Reference Guide* at http://www.wascsenior.org/resources/handbook-accreditation-2013

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

Institutional Purposes
1.1   Formally approved, appropriate statements of purpose that define values and character
1.2   Clear educational objectives; indicators of student achievement at institution, program and course levels; retention/graduation data and evidence of student learning made public

Integrity and Transparency
1.3   Academic freedom: policies and practices
1.4   Diversity: policies, programs, and practices
1.5   Education as primary purpose; autonomy from external entities
1.6   Truthful representation to students/public; fair and equitable policies; timely completion
1.7   Operational integrity; sound business practices; timely and fair responses to complaints; evaluation of institutional performance
1.8   Honest, open communication with WSCUC including notification of material matters; implementation of WSCUC policies

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

Teaching and Learning
2.1   Programs appropriate in content, standards, degree level; sufficient qualified faculty
2.2   Clearly defined degrees re: admission requirements and levels of achievement for graduation; processes to ensure meaning, quality and integrity of degrees
       2.2a – Undergraduate degree requirements, including general education and core competencies
       2.2b – Graduate degree requirements clearly stated and appropriate
2.3   Student learning outcomes (SLOs) and expectations for student learning at all levels; reflected in curricula, programs, policies, advising

2.4 Faculty's collective responsibility for setting SLOs and standards, assessing student learning, demonstrating achievement of standards

2.5 Students actively involved in learning and challenged; feedback on learning provided

2.6 Graduates achieve stated levels of attainment; SLOs embedded in faculty standards for assessing student work

2.7 Program review includes SLOs, retention/graduation data, external evidence and evaluators

Scholarship and Creative Activity

2.8 Scholarship, creative activity, and curricular and instructional innovation for both students and faculty valued and supported

2.9 Faculty evaluation links scholarship, teaching, student learning, and service

Student Learning and Success

2.10 Institution identifies and supports needs of students; tracks aggregated and disaggregated student achievement, satisfaction and campus climate; demonstrates students' timely progress

2.11 Co-curricular programs aligned with academic goals and regularly assessed

2.12 Institution provides useful and complete program information and advising

2.13 Appropriate student support services planned, implemented, and evaluated

2.14 Appropriate information to, and treatment of, transfer students (if applicable)

Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

Faculty and Staff

3.1 Sufficient, qualified, and diverse faculty and staff to support programs and operations

3.2 Faculty and staff policies, practices and evaluation well developed and applied

3.3 Faculty and staff development planned, implemented, and evaluated

Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources

3.4 Financial stability, clean audits, sufficient resources; realistic plans for any deficits; integrated budgeting; enrollment management; diversified revenue sources

3.5 Facilities, services, information and technology resources sufficient and aligned with objectives

Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes

3.6 Leadership operates with integrity, high performance, responsibility, and accountability

3.7 Clear, consistent decision-making structures and processes; priority to sustain institutional capacity and educational effectiveness

3.8 Full-time CEO and full-time CFO; sufficient qualified administrators

3.9 Independent governing board with appropriate oversight, including hiring and evaluating CEO

3.10 Effective academic leadership by faculty

Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

Quality Assurance Processes

4.1 Quality-assurance processes in place to collect, analyze, and interpret data; track results over time; use comparative data; and make improvements

4.2   Sufficient institutional research (IR) capacity; data disseminated and incorporated in planning and decision-making; IR effectiveness assessed

Institutional Learning and Improvement
4.3   Commitment to improvement based on data and evidence; systematic assessment of teaching, learning, campus environment; utilization of results
4.4   Ongoing inquiry into teaching and learning to improve curricula, pedagogy, and assessment
4.5   Appropriate stakeholders involved in regular assessment of institutional effectiveness
4.6   Reflection and planning with multiple constituents; strategic plans align with purposes; address key priorities and future directions; plans are monitored and revised as required
4.7   Anticipating and responding to a changing higher educational environment

Timeline:
Institutions should consult with WSCUC staff on preparing a timeline.

Tasks	Aug-2015	Sep-2015	Oct-2015	Jan-2016	Feb-2016	Jun-2017
Admissions						
Instructors						
Equipment						
Administrative Processes						
Self Evaluation						
Student Outcomes						

5, CCR section 71105.5 (4) (A-D): An outline of the process and timeline whereby the institution will achieve Initial Accreditation :

Full details about achieving Initial Accreditation can be found at: http://www.wascsenior.org/resources/eligibility .

Although each institution will vary depending on maturity and preparation, the following represents what is typical:

1. Contact WSCUC Vice President Richard Osborn who oversee the process for achieving accreditation by writing: rosborn@wascsenior.org or by calling his direct line at (510) 995-3150 for further information.
2. Attendance at an Eligibility Workshop is required before submitting an Eligibility Application.
3. The fee for applying for eligibility is $12,500. Most recent fees can be found on the WSCUC website at: www.wascsenior.org by putting "fee and dues" into the search feature of the website.
4. The institution submits a one-page Notification of Intent to Apply with the application fee.
5. WSCUC staff will provide access to an online portal to which the full Eligibility Application is submitted demonstrating compliance with the 16 Eligibility Criteria.
6. After the application is submitted, a panel of the Eligibility Review Committee is convened, usually within two months, to review the application and to make a decision. The institution is invited to join a conference call as part of the deliberations.
7. Shortly before the conference call takes place, a WSCUC staff liaison is assigned to work with

the institution after Eligibility is granted.

8. If Eligibility is granted (for five years), the institution submits a $15,000 fee which covers the cost of the first two Seeking Accreditation Visits (SAV) with team member travel costs and on-site costs such as hotel and food expenses in addition.
9. A Letter of Intent is submitted to the staff liaison for approval.
10. The institution begins its self-study process to prepare an institutional report demonstrating compliance with WSCUC's Standards. Typically one year is needed between approval of Eligibility and the first SAV. A peer team is appointed of around five team members, depending on the size and complexity of the institution.
11. The SAV is scheduled for three days on campus or at the headquarters of the institution by the staff liaison in consultation with the institution.
12. A team report is submitted focusing on the level of compliance found by the team which is reported to the Commission in a team report.
13. The Commission meets to make decisions either at its February or June meeting.
14. If at least minimal compliance is found with the four Standards by the Commission, the institution is granted Candidacy for five years. Institutions should expect at least two visits with one for Candidacy and one for Initial Accreditation although some institutions may achieve Initial Accreditation with one visit. Subsequent visits only focus on areas found to be in minimal compliance.
15. When substantial compliance is found by the Commission, Initial Accreditation can be granted at either the February or June Commission meeting.
16. If more than one SAV is needed, the interval between visits is usually eighteen months although more or less time may take place depending on advice from the staff liaison.
17. The time required to achieve Eligibility, Candidacy, and Initial Accreditation vary widely, depending on the maturity and robustness of the institution.

Sample University outlines the process and timeline for full accreditation by July 1, 2020

(Note from BPPE – Please determine what the appropriate timelines will be in consultation with WSCUC staff.)

Tasks	April-2015	July – 2015	June-2016	Sept 2016	Dec 2016	Feb 2017	July-2017	March-2018	Sept-2019
Contact Accreditor									
Determine Eligibility & Financial Statements									
Attend Workshop									
Submit Application & Self Evaluation Report									
Initial Site Visit									
Team Visit									
Team Report									
Response									

WASC Senior College and University Commission

Accreditor Decision									

Note: This is a basic sample accreditation plan. The requirements and dates for each individual plan will vary by institution and chosen accreditor.