

February 26, 2020

Dr. Elizabeth Hillman  
President  
Mills College  
5000 MacArthur Blvd  
Oakland, CA 94613

Dear President Hillman:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning Mills College (Mills) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting February 14, 2020. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Accreditation Visit to Mills September 10-12, 2019. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by Mills prior to the Offsite Review (OSR), the supplemental materials requested by the team after the OSR, and the institution's November 6, 2019 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Dr. Chinyere Oparah, Provost and Dean of the Faculty; Ms. Maria Cammarata, VP for Finance/Administration; Dr. Sheila Lloyd, Associate Provost; and Dr. Marianne Sheldon, 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 eight years
3. Schedule the next reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in spring 2027 and the Accreditation Visit in fall 2027
4. Schedule the Mid-Cycle Review to begin May 1, 2024
5. Schedule a Special Visit in fall 2023 to address:
  - a. Revision and evaluation of the FSP
  - b. Staffing and technological support for students with disabilities
  - c. Under-staffing and faculty workload
  - d. Assessment of student retention efforts and progress in improving student retention.

The Commission commends Mills in particular for the following:

1. A dedicated faculty and staff who further Mills' mission through active and creative engagement in promoting student success at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.
2. A commitment by Mills' leadership to institutional cohesion and unity through effective communication, transparency, shared governance, and collegiality that supports an environment of innovation.

3. An effective evidence-based, equity-minded approach to institutional research using disaggregated data to advance the college's mission.
4. Systematic efforts to increase retention and completion that are responsive to Mills' changing demographics and aligned with the college's mission.
5. Steady progress made toward aligning learning outcomes as well as expanding and refining assessment protocols.
6. Significant strides in identifying alternative sources of revenue, such as land resources and renting IP addresses.
7. A dedication to serving as an anchor institution, demonstrating that success of the college is inextricably linked to the health, economic, and educational well-being of the surrounding communities.
8. A social justice mission that is enhanced by Mills achieving status as a Hispanic Serving Institution.

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

1. Evaluate and revise the existing Financial Stabilization Plan (FSP) in recognition of the fact that the timeline and some key initiatives in the plan have not been achieved; build upon aspects of the plan that have shown positive results. (CFR 3.4)
2. Engage in on-going needs assessment of staffing and technological resources that support accessibility to ensure that Mills College is fulfilling its responsibility to meet the access and service needs of its students, staff, and faculty. (CFR 1.4, 2.13, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, Equity and Inclusion Policy)
3. Assess the impact of reductions in personnel on retention of faculty, staff, and students and develop a comprehensive plan for retaining faculty and staff that includes target goals for regularizing faculty and staffing levels in all campus programs and services. Regularly report progress toward goals to the campus community. (CFR 3.1)
4. Ensure student retention efforts are regularly and thoroughly assessed and data are being used to improve retention outcomes. (CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.13, 4.1)
5. Address issues of equity in staff salaries and evaluate shifts in faculty responsibilities to ensure shifting workload is accurately evaluated. (CFR 3.2, 3.4)
6. Advance progress toward a comprehensive assessment initiative, spanning the curriculum and co-curriculum, that uses data for continuous improvement and includes a training plan for faculty and academic staff, and delineates lines of responsibility among Planning, Analytics, and Effectiveness leadership. (CFR 2.7, 4.1, 4.2)
7. Continue to expand access to and development of the curriculum through expansion of robust online programs and by providing faculty with comprehensive training in online teaching and learning pedagogies. (CFR 3.5; Distance Education and Technology-Mediated Instruction Policy)

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that Mills has addressed the three Core Commitments and has successfully completed the two-stage institutional review process conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. In

keeping with WSCUC values, Mills 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 will be sent to the chair of Mills' governing board. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the Mills' 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 Mills 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,



Christopher N. Oberg  
Executive Vice President

CNO/thh

Cc: Reed Dasenbrock, Commission Chair  
Marianne Sheldon, ALO  
Katie Sanborn, Board Chair  
Members of the Accreditation Visit team  
Tamela H. Hawley, Vice President