

March 9, 2018

Ms. Carey Perloff  
Artistic Director  
Mr. Peter Pastreich  
Executive Director  
American Conservatory Theater  
30 Grant Avenue, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94108-5834

Dear Directors Perloff and Pastreich:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning American Conservatory Theater (ACT) 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 Accreditation Visit to ACT December 4-6, 2017. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by ACT prior to the Offsite Review (OSR), the supplemental materials requested by the team after the OSR, and the institution's January 24, 2018 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues: Melissa Smith, Conservatory Director; Daniel Kolodny, Manager, Conservatory Operations; and Jack Sharrar, Director of Academic Affairs/ALO. 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 2025 and the Accreditation Visit in fall 2025
4. Schedule the Mid-Cycle Review for May 1, 2022
5. Schedule a Special Visit in spring 2021 to address all recommendations in this report with a special focus on transitions in leadership

### **Commendations**

The Commission commends ACT in particular for the following:

1. The Board of Trustees and the MFA Board, for developing deeply engaged ways to support and encourage students in the MFA Program and for supporting the program financially and through civic involvement.
2. The deep integration and collaborative spirit around education at ACT, which includes not only the MFA Program, but the entire Education Program, including the Fellows, the Young Conservatory, the San Francisco Semester, and the Summer Training program.

3. An engaged, knowledgeable staff (many recently hired) who use ACT's mission as the driving force of their activities and collaborate effectively to identify and address key issues.
4. The acquisition and development of The Strand Theater and for the ways it has invigorated and strengthened the MFA program.
5. The academic leadership, for responding to student initiatives and requests and developing the Citizen Artist program, which benefits not only the MFA students but also the larger community.
6. The development of the ACT Readiness Rubric and the ways it has already been used for faculty evaluation of students.
7. The institution's commitment to, and deep engagement in, making a thoughtful and effective leadership transition as the top two executive positions will be filled by new leaders within the next twelve months.
8. ACT's recruitment and retention of an excellent, articulate, diverse, and highly engaged student body.
9. A dedicated faculty, including both Core and Adjunct Faculty, who are strongly committed to students' academic and professional growth and development.
10. An Artistic and Executive Director who embrace and support the educational mission of the MFA program in the context of the overall artistic growth and development of the institution.

## **Recommendations**

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

1. Once a new Artistic Director and Executive Director are hired, ACT should develop a 3-5 year strategic plan that addresses physical facilities, programming, and education initiatives, to be accompanied by a financial and implementation plan with a specific timeline. (CFR 4.6)
2. While ACT has created an overall framework for assessment by developing the Readiness Rubric and using it to assess individual student performance, ACT should also use assessment findings generated with the Rubric for academic program improvement in curriculum and pedagogy. (CFRs 2.4, 2.6. and 4.3)
3. The MFA Program should collaborate with the Education Program on matters of academic program assessment, particularly around curricular elements related to community engagement and devised work. (CFRs 2.3 and 4.3)
4. ACT should develop processes of governance and representation structures for faculty, staff, and students that ensure clear, transparent, and timely communication with the administration. (CFRs 3.7 and 3.10)
5. ACT should invest significant effort in improving organizational health, particularly as it relates to faculty and staff workloads, and to faculty evaluation and professional development. (CFR 3.2)
6. ACT should clarify the role and responsibilities of Core Faculty to strengthen faculty leadership. (CFR 3.1)
7. ACT's faculty should be empowered as a group to develop enhanced assessment and program review processes that lead to regular improvements to curriculum and

- pedagogy, and that address the changing nature of the field of theater. (CFRs 2.4 and 2.7)
8. ACT should develop comprehensive, clear, and linear grievance policies and processes for both employees and students and communicate them clearly. (CFR 1.7)
  9. ACT should develop a plan to address student indebtedness issues as articulated by members of the administration and the Boards. (CFR 2.10)
  10. ACT should enhance its technological support for student learning, such as providing email accounts for students and improving WiFi access. (CFR 3.5)

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that American Conservatory Theater has addressed the three Core Commitments and has successfully completed the two-stage institutional review process 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.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of American Conservatory Theater'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 American Conservatory Theater 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 American Conservatory Theater 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/do

Cc: Reed Dasenbrock, Commission Chair  
Jack Sharar, ALO  
Nancy Livingston, Board Chair  
Members of the Accreditation Visit team  
Richard Osborn, Vice President