



## **For Immediate Release**

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Contact: Ashley Eisele  
(707) 965-6100  
aeisele@puc.edu

## **In Response to Notice of Concern, PUC Focuses on Turnaround Plan**

ANGWIN, Calif. — In response to Pacific Union College's (PUC) most recent accreditation report to WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), the college received a Notice of Concern from the accreditation commission and has responded accordingly by notifying WSCUC of recent financial updates. PUC has already begun the implementation of a two-year turnaround plan, which will address the concerns outlined in the Notice.

The letter of concern was triggered when the college self-reported its financial challenges to WSCUC in November 2019. The Notice, which was received by the college's administration in March 2020, praised PUC for its transparency to candidly address the financial difficulties the college has undergone. The college also received praise for already taking steps for improvement, engaging the entire campus, including the Board of Trustees, in financial and enrollment planning, and adhering to the college's mission even when responding to challenges.

PUC President Bob Cushman said, "We take this very seriously. A notice of concern from one's accrediting body is an alert to an institution that, if current trends continue, the institution will be out of compliance with one or more accreditation standards. In our case, this relates specifically to PUC's financial situation, which we are aggressively working to address."

PUC has been forthcoming about its plans to responsibly address current operational challenges and the college's Board of Trustees had already voted in February 2020 to continue implementing the campus turnaround plan.

"This is not a reflection of the academic experience that students receive at PUC. We were recently ranked number 10 in the region by *U.S. News and World Report*, and we are preparing to launch new academic programs that will provide valuable paths to employment for students," said Cushman. "We are in a position that many liberal arts colleges have found themselves in when it comes to financial challenges. But, we are unique in that we have a community of faith surrounding us and the full support of the Pacific Union Conference behind us as we move forward with our turnaround plan."

The college's turnaround plan includes a renewed focus on increasing enrollment and improving retention, the continued expansion of ancillary business opportunities, and the realignment of academic programs to better serve the needs of the college and its constituents. PUC's response to WSCUC regarding the Notice of Concern also reported that a recent line of credit from the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists would enable PUC to continue to implement this turnaround plan.

To fulfill the initiatives included in the college's plan, a reduction in the faculty and staff workforce has taken place. Twenty-one faculty and staff positions have been impacted through a combination of attrition, early retirement, and reductions in force. "Despite this being a very difficult decision, it was a critical move for the college to make for us to move toward long-term financial sustainability," said Cushman.

Even as PUC has transitioned to remote classes and online learning in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the college is seeing positive results. There are currently 924 students enrolled for spring quarter, a slight increase from the winter headcount of 921, and close to the fall 2019 headcount of 928 students. Maintaining these numbers from fall to spring has broken at least seven years of negative enrollment for the school.

"These are challenging times for many higher education institutions in general and PUC is faced with making difficult decisions," said Cushman. "But I am confident in the dedication of our faculty and staff, the strength of our turnaround plan, and our trust in God's guidance as we continue to educate students for lives of service and Christian leadership."

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Founded in 1882, Pacific Union College is a fully accredited liberal arts college that offers a full lineup of bachelor's degrees as well as several associate degrees, one master's degree, and pre-professional and degree completion programs. A destination campus in California, PUC is Napa Valley's only four-year college and is affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.