June 2010 the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) issued a letter to La Sierra University president Randal Wisbey, stating it would return for a special visit spring 2011, because of what WASC considered a threat to LSU’s institutional autonomy and academic freedom. There has been no word about exactly when WASC will visit LSU or even if it has already visited.

The Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA) gave LSU until Dec. 31, 2012 to demonstrate its faithfulness to church teaching on creation, according to the Adventist Review. After AAA’s visit, LSU issued an apology letter signed by president Randal Wisbey and LSU board chair, Ricardo Graham. The letter came almost two years after the initial allegations were made public in a letter David Asscherick wrote to the General Conference April 2009.

As LSU juggles WASC and AAA, it will be interesting to see how LSU complies with AAA without looking like it is giving in to what WASC describes as efforts that would compromise LSU’s academic freedom and institutional autonomy. The WASC letter to Wisbey states:

In your communications with the Commission, both in writing prior to meeting and at the Commission meeting, you expressed the commitment of the board and the president to resist efforts that would compromise academic freedom and institutional autonomy. The Commission’s action, described below, is intended to assure that La Sierra University withstands this threat and continues to meet WASC
Standards. (CFRs 1.4, 1.6, 2.2a, 3.8)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

A. Receive the Educational Effectiveness Review report and reaffirm the accreditation of La Sierra University.

B. Schedule the Capacity and Preparatory Review for spring 2018 and the Educational Effectiveness Review for fall 2019. The Institutional Proposal for this comprehensive review will be due in spring 2016.

C. Schedule a Special Visit in spring 2011, focused on the issues surrounding the teaching of evolution in the science curriculum, including institutional autonomy, the appropriate role of the board and faculty, and academic freedom. The institution’s spring 2011 Special Visit report will be due eight weeks prior to this visit.

D. Schedule an Interim Report due Nov. 1, 2014, focused on the issues set forth in this letter, including strategic planning, assessment, student success, information technology and institutional research, and any unresolved matters related to the controversy about the teaching of science.

WASC