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PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Ralph A. Wulff

June 24, 2009

Alexander Gonzalez
President
California State University, Sacramento
6000 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95819-6016

Dear President Gonzalez:

At its meeting on June 17-19, 2009, the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) team that conducted the visit to California State University, Sacramento (CSUS) on April 9-11, 2009. The Commission also had access to the Educational Effectiveness Review report prepared by the University prior to the visit, and to the documents relating to the CPR visit conducted in April 2007. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you, Provost Joseph Sheley, Associate Vice President and Dean of Academic Programs Mike Lee, and Professor and Department Chair of Humanities and Chair of the CSUS Educational Effectiveness Review Steering Committee Jackie Donath. Your comments were helpful to the Commission, especially in understanding your plans to address the issues raised in the team report.

This re-accreditation review began with the submission of CSUS's Proposal, which was approved by the WASC Proposal Review Committee in April 2005. The themes set forth in the Proposal – Strategic Planning, Assessment and Program Review, Campus Life (including the collaboration between academic and student affairs) and Community Engagement -- were explored honestly and deeply, and with a true spirit of inquiry for the purpose of institutional improvement. Evidence was provided to address each hypothesis, in keeping with the culture of evidence that undergirds the Standards of Accreditation. As noted by the team, your review "prompted the institution to gain greater insight into quality assurance cycles and the extent of student learning ... [C]onstituents from across the community were enlisted in the educational effectiveness efforts ... [and] in the preparation of the institution's review portfolio and report."

The Commission's action letter of July 2007 raised four major issues for special attention during the interval between the CPR and EER visits: assessment of student learning, including the implementation of a comprehensive plan for assessment and program review; alignment of strategic planning, budgeting, and financial resources and development of appropriate roles for faculty and other constituencies in planning and budgeting; analysis of student success and diversity; and building of appropriate mechanisms to support students and promote student success, including improved retention and graduation rates. The CPR team was especially disappointed to learn that the promising work on assessment during the previous comprehensive review cycle had not been sustained, and that CSUS was in essence beginning its assessment endeavor all over again. However, following the CPR visit and the related action letter, CSUS took direct and concerted actions to address each of these issues and made significant improvements in assessment and the other areas cited above. The laudable steps taken by

administrative and faculty leadership have resulted in what the team recognized as “major advances in transparency, governance, commitment to student success, and assessment.”

The Commission commends CSUS for creating and implementing a systematic process for program review, for building faculty support and expertise to engage in assessment, and for creating institutional mechanisms that hold promise for sustaining this work. Two new planning and budgeting entities are working effectively to ensure broad involvement in financial matters and to fully implement a workable and well-aligned strategic plan. Finally, extensive research about student success has been conducted in a collaborative enterprise involving faculty, student affairs, and institutional research. This collaboration, using evidence as its guide, is evaluating and developing programs to support student success. Specific retention and graduation goals have been set. Also to be commended are CSUS’s community engagement work and the effective partnership between academic and student affairs.

The Commission endorses the commendations and recommendations of the EER team report and wishes to emphasize the following areas for further attention and development:

Continued Progress on Assessment of Student Learning. As noted above and highlighted in the team report, “tremendous strides have been made in the assessment of student learning” since the time of the CPR visit. The driver in this transformation appears to have been an enhanced and well-received program review process. Six-year cyclical program review has been implemented for programs at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Program review self-studies include data on student success and learning outcomes. External consultants are utilized in addition to peers. As reported by the team, “program review has been a powerful engine for building campus community and improving programs.” The next stage in CSUS’s use of program review is to tie program review to planning and budgeting, so that program review findings and recommendations are addressed in the campus-wide resource allocation process. Attention also needs to be given to clarifying general education and baccalaureate learning goals before assessment of general education can be conducted. The basic infrastructure for conducting assessment and reporting results has been established. Now, processes should be aligned for efficiency and clarity, and the emphasis should move from setting up good processes to analyzing and using the results. (Criteria for Review (CFRs) 2.3-2.7, 4.4, and 4.7)

Continued Development of Planning and Budgeting. The CPR team report and the subsequent Commission letter noted CSUS’s structural deficit and the need for closer alignment of planning and budgeting, greater faculty involvement in planning and budgeting, and improved transparency and communication about financial matters. The team found that CSUS had not only made progress in these areas, but in fact had been transformed. A new climate of collaboration, transparency, shared responsibility and accountability has been established. The team lauded “[t]he use of evidence-based decision making” and an “open and consultative” budget process. At the same time, new challenges lie ahead in this era of economic recession, enrollment caps, and the state fiscal crisis. CSUS needs to build on its new foundation of trust and collaboration to address these challenges. Strengthening planning with advanced analytical tools, providing widespread access to data, and coordinating the several levels of planning and budgeting will be called for in the days to come. (CFRs 3.5, 3.8, and 4.1-4.3)

Promoting Student Success. Student success is one of CSUS’s highest priorities and is noted as such in its strategic plan. In this plan, CSUS set 2012-13 targets for a six-year graduation rate of 46 percent and a four-year graduation rate for transfer students of 62 percent. The transfer rate target has already been met (at 66 percent) and is being re-set at a higher level. The targets reflect a substantial increase from current rates. For example, six-year graduation rates for first-time freshmen at the time of the CPR visit ranged from 36 to 41 percent. The targets were established after extensive institutional research and collaboration among campus constituencies, most notably academic and student affairs. Positive effects

on retention can be found in some existing programs for low-income and disadvantaged students. CSUS also participates in the Educational Equity Score Card, which allows faculty and deans to develop interventions to address the varied needs of the diverse student body served by CSUS. The institution is urged to continue this good work by supporting the collaboration between academic and student affairs, sustaining progress through the creation of a permanent oversight entity to study and address challenges and barriers to student success, and expanding the work that has been done with graduate-level programs. Finally, obvious barriers to timely graduation, such as deficiencies in course scheduling, should be addressed. (CFRs 2.10-2.14)

Supporting the Development of the EdD Degree Program. The Commission approved CSUS's offering of an EdD degree, with tracks in K-12 and community college education, in July 2007. Issues identified in the subsequent action letter included hiring of additional faculty with emphasis on qualifications and scholarship in the community college track; development of a comprehensive assessment plan and rubrics for evaluating the qualifying examination and dissertation; application of a periodic program review process that has student learning outcomes assessment embedded in it; adaptation of workload and scholarship requirements that support a doctoral-level culture; and appointment of a program director. These issues were the subject of a report submitted to WASC in December 2008 (later revised in February 2009), and were explored during the EER visit. Although the faculty has been expanded, the program director has been appointed, and progress has been made in developing aspects of assessment, the recommendations have not been fully addressed. As noted by the team, "there is no structured vehicle for collaboration between the two colleges that host the EdD," which creates challenges in making faculty assignments, establishing equitable workloads, and aligning outcomes and courses. Although deeply committed to the program, the faculty members teaching in it have not arrived at consensus on the meaning of a doctoral culture appropriate for the program. A formal structure for collaboration, a comprehensive assessment plan, a shared definition of doctoral culture and the establishment of policies that support it will be needed by the time of the EdD Special Visit, which is scheduled for fall 2012. (CFR 2.1. 2.2b, Guideline to 2.2b, 2.3-2.7, 2.8-2.9, 3.3, 3.4, 4.4)

The Commission acted to:

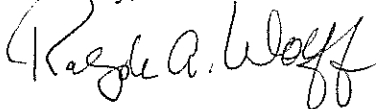
1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness Review report and reaffirm the accreditation of California State University, Sacramento.
2. Schedule the Capacity and Preparatory Review for spring 2017 and the Educational Effectiveness Review for fall 2018. The Institutional Proposal will be due in spring 2015.
3. Request an Interim Report in spring 2012 on the issues cited in the EER report, especially 1) progress on assessment of student learning and program review, 2) continued development of planning and budgeting, and 3) progress in promoting student success.
4. Proceed with the scheduled Special Visit in fall 2012 to review the EdD degree program.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that California State University, Sacramento has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness, and has successfully completed the three-stage review conducted under the Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review, the institution is expected to continue its progress and to be prepared to respond as expectations of institutional performance, especially with respect to Educational Effectiveness and student learning, further develop under the application of the *2008 Handbook of Accreditation*.

In accordance with Commission policy, copies of this letter will be sent to Chancellor Charles Reed and the chair of the CSU Board of Trustees in one week. It is the Commission's expectation that the team report and this action letter will be widely disseminated throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement, and to support the institution's response to the specific issues identified in them

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ralph A. Wolff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Ralph A. Wolff
President and Executive Director

RW/tc/aa

cc: Sherwood Lingenfelter
Chancellor Charles Reed
CSU Board of Trustees Chair
Mike Lee, ALO
Members of the team
Teri Cannon