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Ralph A. Wolff

June 26, 2009

Karen S. Haynes  
President  
California State University San Marcos  
333 S. Twin Oaks Valley Road  
San Marcos, CA 92096

Dear President Haynes:

At its meeting on June 17-19, 2009, the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) team, which visited California State University, San Marcos (CSUSM) on April 7-9, 2009. The Commission had access to the Institutional Presentation for the Educational Effectiveness Review, the team report from the visit, and the response submitted by the institution to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Emily Cutrer, and Interim Associate Vice President for Planning & Accreditation Jennifer Jeffries. Your comments were helpful.

The team observed that the self-study efforts and related institutional report gave both guidance and momentum in the three thematic areas identified in the Proposal: academic master planning, strengthening academic programs through assessment of student learning, and improving retention of first-year students. The institution's EER report demonstrated rigorous inquiry and generally effective use of data, describing an institution broadly engaged in using the review process to its advantage in each of the thematic areas. As the team noted:

The self-study process demonstrates significant campus participation and engagement and institutional commitment to the creation of a "learning organization" based on an emerging "culture of evidence" and key functions such as planning, assessment, and program review that the University continues to develop and strengthen (p. 4).

In addition to finding the institution to have been responsive to Commission recommendations following the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) visit, the team also noted such key initiatives as the First Year Program (using the "Foundations of Excellence" model), together with promising levels of collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs in assessing student learning outcomes. The team was impressed with the ambitious undertaking to incorporate extensive writing assignments in many undergraduate courses, as well as with the impact of the appointment of a General Education Assessment

Coordinator – with the responsibility to align General Education outcomes with the LEAP initiative. In its concluding observations, the team

was impressed by many aspects of the University and many examples of good practices across the University. In particular, the Team's interviews with undergraduate and graduate students, including students in the joint Doctorate in Educational Leadership (EdD) Program, demonstrated the positive educational experiences that students have at CSU San Marcos, resulting from close faculty-student interactions, small class size, and enriched curricular and co-curricular activities (p. 34).

The team also found the institution to be candid about its continuing challenges. In this regard, the Commission endorses the team's conclusion that the institution should sustain its current efforts in each of the following areas, using the specific recommendations in the team report to provide context in support of these efforts:

**Assessment of Learning.** The institution needs to continue to enhance its skills and structures related to assessment of learning, and complete its formal policies and templates related to program review, including obtaining Faculty Senate endorsement of the program review plans. (CFRs 3.5, 4.1-4.6, 4.8)

**Academic Planning.** By building on the foundational work already begun in academic planning, the institution should expand the visible linkages between academic planning and resource allocations. (CFRs 2.6, 2.7, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7)

**Retention and Graduation.** Continuing the excellent work the institution has already begun related to the first-year experience and retention, CSUSM should expand the focus of these efforts to include retention beyond the first year, and toward improvements in the six-year graduation rates. (CFRs 1.5, 2.3, 2.6, 2.10-2.14, 3.5, 4.1-4.3, 4.6, 4.8)

The Commission commends the institution for its serious engagement with the review process and for its ongoing efforts to more fully complete the intended outcomes from the reaffirmation cycle.

The Commission acted to:

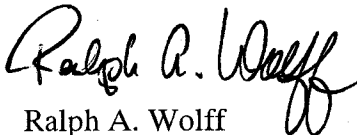
1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness team report and reaffirm the accreditation of California State University, San Marcos.
2. Schedule the Capacity and Preparatory Review for spring 2016 and the Educational Effectiveness Review for fall 2017. The Institutional Proposal will be due in spring 2014.
3. Schedule an Interim Report in fall 2012 on the three issues identified above.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that California State University, San Marcos has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness, and has successfully completed the multistage 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 be prepared to respond as expectations of institutional performance, especially with respect to educational effectiveness and student learning, develop further 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. The Commission expects 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 about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Ralph A. Wolff  
President and Executive Director

RW/aa

cc: Sherwood Lingenfelter, Commission chair  
Board Chair  
Jennifer Jeffries, ALO  
Members of the team  
Richard Winn