



July 13, 2007

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 20-22, 2007, the Commission considered the report of the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) team, which visited California State University, San Marcos (CSUSM), on March 7-9, 2007. The Commission had access to the Institutional Presentation for the Capacity and Preparatory 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 and with Tom Bennett, Associate Vice President for Strategic Planning & Assessment and ALO. Your comments were helpful.

The team report portrays an institution that, in spite of leadership turnovers since the last WASC review, has rallied to prepare itself quite thoroughly for this review cycle. Recognizing that CSUSM is in a rapid growth mode, the Commission was pleased to see how often words like "commitment" and "enthusiasm" were used in the team report to describe the faculty, staff, and administration of this relatively young institution. Responding to issues identified in the Commission's 2000 action letter, CSUSM exhibits significant progress in espousing a shared academic vision and in demonstrating broad engagement with assessment. Issues related to faculty workload and student diversity have also received productive attention by the campus community since 2000, though they remain high priorities for the institution.

Concurring with the team report, the Commission commended the institution for its inclusive strategic planning process, which places "University First" as a core value and carries forward that value in a collective process to reach a consensus on University priorities prior to establishing the budget (Criteria for Review (CFR) 4.1). As the team noted:

The University is to be commended on the development of a budgetary structure that is based upon a "shared vision" and shared priorities (CFR 3.5). This has reduced the lobbying by

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individual departments for funding of their own projects and has allowed the University to come together in the allocation of funds with a “University First” Philosophy. (p. 20)

Similarly, the extensive efforts devoted to the General Education program are producing innovative assessment strategies in time for use in the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) (CFR 2.2 and 2.3).

There is also a strong institutional commitment to faculty development, supported by significant budgetary and training resources.

The Commission commended the University for these productive steps, and the many others reported in its CPR report. In receiving the CPR team report, the Commission endorsed the findings and recommendations of the team. In addition, it highlighted the following issues to be considered at the time of the Educational Effectiveness Review:

**Student Access and Success.** As CSUSM anticipates a designation as an HSI (Hispanic-Serving Institution) in the near future, it is clear that it has already made systemic commitments to the concepts and culture of diversity (CFR 1.5). As a means to solidify and enhance these commitments, the institution should ensure appropriate support for diversity leadership. The University should also conduct disaggregated reviews of retention and completion rates from the most recent six-year cohort, begin to track completion rates for different student groups, and, with this data, begin to set targets in areas where improvement is needed.

**Curricular and Co-curricular Assessment of Learning.** While it is clear that CSUSM has made noteworthy progress in incorporating student learning outcomes into most of its academic programs and in planning for related assessment activities, it needs to incorporate direct assessment of learning more fully into all of its academic and co-curricular programs. It should also continue to develop ways to assess the impact of its co-curricular programs on the formation of its graduates (CFR 2.10). The use of achievement data to inform program improvement should achieve a higher degree of consistency among the various units of the University (CFR 4.7 and 4.8). Specific attention to these strategies could well be a focus of ongoing faculty and staff development programming.

**Enhanced Budgetary Planning.** The University’s budget planning process, while quite inclusive and transparent, could benefit from the more extensive use of data on the effectiveness of its current allocations. To this end, the institution should consider obtaining and using benchmark comparisons from similar institutions, from within and beyond the CSU System (CFR 3.5 and 4.8).

The Commission also noted that the team reviewed the progress of the joint doctorate in educational Leadership EdD program, approved by the Commission in February 2005.

The team found that the program is operating effectively and that the University has addressed the issues raised by the Commission in its approval action.

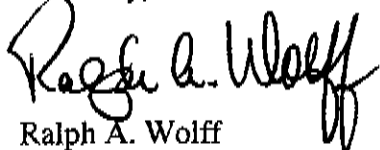
The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Capacity and Preparatory team report and continue accreditation of California State University, San Marcos.
2. Proceed with the scheduled Educational Effectiveness Review in spring 2009.
3. Request that the institution incorporate its response to the issues raised in this action letter and the major recommendations of the Capacity team report in its Educational Effectiveness Report. This may be done by referencing where these responses are in the Table of Contents or in an addendum to the Report.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to Chancellor Charles Reed 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,



Ralph A. Wolff  
President and Executive Director

RW/aa

cc: John Welty  
Charles Reed  
Tom Bennett  
Members of the team  
Richard Winn