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July 10, 2000

Milton A. Gordon  
President  
California State University, Fullerton  
P.O. Box 34080  
Fullerton, CA 92834-9480

Dear President Gordon:

At its meeting June 22-23, 2000, the Commission reviewed the report of the evaluation team that visited the campus on March 20-24, 2000. The Commission also had available to it the self study developed by the University in preparation for this visit. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to meet with you; Ephraim Smith, Vice President for Academic Affairs; and Thomas Klammer, Dean, Humanities and Social Sciences. Your comments were helpful, especially given the experimental nature of the self study and visit.

The Commission commends the University for the vitality and effectiveness of its multi-stage self study process. Each of the three stages of the study appear to have served the University well, and together provide an impressive commitment to self review and improvement. The campus engagement generated by the process also is noteworthy, and the Commission urges that the investment made in these processes continue within the University, and that the commitment to making learning "preeminent" be further refined and supported in ways recommended through the self-study process, evaluation team review and report, and in future University initiatives.

The Commission also commends the University for its attention to and progress in addressing the major concerns of the last ten year visit and fifth year review. Since the last comprehensive review of the University, there has been tremendous growth in nearly all facets of the University, and the University has established a significant record of faculty and student accomplishments. The Commission noted that the University has taken up previous concerns about University planning and continues to undertake planning as a high priority to accommodate current and future growth. Review of the general education program continues, and a significant foundation has been established in identifying learning outcomes and in reviewing specific courses. The University has also responded to previous concerns about student support. The evaluation team reports an ongoing planning and review process for student support services, and impressive initiatives such as the Fullerton First Year program and the University Learning Center.

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The Commission is aware that the evaluation team, with full University support and development, shifted to experiment with an academic audit format when it became evident that the University's own self-study findings concluded that considerable success had already been achieved in fulfilling the University's new statement of mission to be a "place where learning is preeminent." The audit format was intended to look at academic programs and core institutional processes to evaluate the extent of their alignment with the University mission and to recommend practical ways of improving these key University activities. The Commission was pleased that the University, as well as the evaluation team, found the process so useful. Of particular value were the questions developed by the University for all academic departments as the basis for brief departmental self-reviews and the frame for the evaluation's team's inquiry with a limited number of academic departments. The Commission also found these questions to be very useful, and urges the University to continue to use such types of questions to further its own understanding of student and institutional learning.

Within the framework of this extensive self-study and review process, the evaluation team undertook a review of the University in the context of the spirit of Commission accreditation standards and found that the University is in compliance with them. The Commission concurs with this conclusion and views the self-study and visit process as significant evidence of the University's commitment to self-review and disclosure.

In the course of its review, the evaluation team made a number of recommendations and suggestions to the University that have the potential of leading to improvements in both the functioning of specific units and in strengthening institutional effectiveness. These were included both in the body of the report and in appendices. The Commission urges that the University consider these as recommendations and suggestions. There are several areas which the Commission identified as useful for further University attention:

**Refining the definition and improving evidence of learning.** The self study and evaluation team report revealed, not surprisingly, that there are many definitions of learning at use within the University, and many indicators of success. The Commission urges that the University continue to use the mission statement as a frame for refining the definitions of student learning the institution intends for its students, the indicators that will be considered appropriate, and the support that will be provided to encourage and improve learning results. Particular attention is needed to further embed this commitment to learning results in the University's ongoing core processes - course approvals, program performance reviews, and evaluations of student support. The variation among the departments reported by the evaluation team is understood, but attention is needed to share good practices, provide support and training to faculty and staff, and to use evidence and data for further improvements within departments and across the University at all degree levels.

**Continued strengthening of general education.** The evaluation team identified areas to further strengthen the general education program. This is important as the University continues to enlarge its freshman student body, and at the upper division level, for transfer students.

Given the size and complexity of the University, the program will need to be adaptable to many different types of students. Clarification of the program, improved communication about it to students and continued attention to defining the goals of the program and working to establish evidence of their accomplishment will be important priorities.

**Improving the Program Performance Review Process.** The University identified the Program Performance Review (PPR) process as a core quality assurance process within the University and as such it was reviewed in depth by the evaluation team. The PPR process has significant potential for embedding the University's commitment to learning, through the identification of learning objectives; review of pedagogy; development of indicators of achievement; review of academic standards; and use of evidence, all tied to improving departmental performance. To accomplish these goals, significant support will be needed to assist departments, including the sharing of good practices. The roles of deans and policies on the use of data will also need to be clarified. The evaluation team has recommended a number of other areas for improvement which the Commission considers useful.

**Supporting faculty learning and development.** As reported to the Commission, the University is hiring large numbers of faculty to meet its needs based upon growth and faculty retirements. This presents a strategic opportunity to recruit and support faculty committed to the learning goals of the University. The self study and evaluation team identify strong faculty and staff support programs, and a highly successful process for supporting the introduction of technology on the campus. Faculty scholarship is also reported to be strong. In this environment, the Commission urges that faculty support be enhanced not only for creative and scholarly development, but also for the types of faculty learning needed to promote and improve student learning.

The Commission acted to:

1. Reaffirm the accreditation of California State University, Fullerton.
2. Schedule the Preparatory Review in the spring of 2010 and the Educational Effectiveness Review in the spring of 2011. The proposal for the two-staged review is due October 15, 2007.

In June 2000 the Commission adopted a new framework for accreditation set forth in *Invitation to Dialogue II*, which establishes an accreditation cycle including a formal institutional proposal followed by Preparatory and Educational Effectiveness Reviews. In light of the action taken at this meeting, the next accreditation cycle will occur under this new framework as delineated above.

In accordance with Commission policy, we request that you send a copy of this letter to Chancellor Charles Reed.

COMMISSION ACTION LETTER - PAGE 4  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON  
JULY 10, 2000

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

Sincerely,

*(Original is signed)*

Ralph A. Wolff  
Executive Director

cc: Marilyn P. Sutton  
Geoffrey M. Cox  
Keith O. Boyum  
Members of the Team