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PRESIDENT
Ralph A. Wolff

July 3, 2012

Mildred Garcia
President
California State University, Fullerton
P.O. Box 34080
Fullerton, CA 92834-9480

Dear President Garcia:

At its meeting June 13-15, 2012 the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) team that conducted the visit to California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) March 7-9, 2012. The Commission also had access to the Educational Effectiveness Review report prepared by CSUF prior to the visit, the institution's May 21, 2012 response to the visiting team report, and the documents relating to the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) visit conducted in spring 2010. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you, Provost Steve Murray, Accreditation Liaison Officer Ed Trotter, Vice President Silas Abrego, and Senate Chair Jack Bedell. Your comments were helpful.

CSUF's Institutional Proposal outlined three themes for this comprehensive review: (1) campus-wide planning, (2) student learning and its assessment, and (3) promoting student engagement and success. The Commission was pleased to recognize the University's strong commitment to pursuing these thematic goals over the entire comprehensive review, as outlined in the original 2007 proposal. The visiting team report observed that CSUF's self-review was "fruitful in developing its understanding and systems in service of student learning."

In addition, the Commission's action letter of July 8, 2010 highlighted two major issues for special attention during the interval between the CPR and EER visits: (1) institutional planning and resource management and (2) assessment of student learning and success. The Commission was pleased to learn that by the time of the EER visit, progress had been made in both areas. For example, institutional planning and resource management have not only been sustained but carried forward, particularly in the planned hiring of new faculty despite the constrictions of state funding. Gains have also been achieved in processes for the assessment of student learning and success, as in the coordination of learning outcomes at multiple levels of specificity that helps "guide instruction and assessment efforts and also help[s] to identify areas for improvement in teaching and learning." The Commission also noted the initiatives in place to support student success and engagement, such as those sustained in the Academic Advising Center and the "Finish in Four" program.

The University is to be commended especially for the thoroughness and candor of its EER self-review. As noted by the visiting team, “the EER report text, its exhibits, and its appendices demonstrate rigorous inquiry supported by data and evidence. The visiting team found the report to accurately portray and analyze both the accomplishments of CSUF during the period of review and its agenda for continuous improvement.”

The Commission endorsed the four recommendations of the EER team, which included the following areas: (1) strategic planning; (2) assessment of student learning, including general education; (3) the application of assessment findings to improve educational effectiveness in off-campus and distance learning and planning related to possible expansion; and (4) unevenness in academic advising.

The Commission expects the University to give special consideration to the following areas:

Engaging with the integrated strategic plan. As highlighted in the team report, the University’s culture is “highly participative and inclusive, and the planning process has been consistent with that cultural norm.” This strength will take on added importance given the fundamental changes in senior leadership over the coming months and the continuing pressures from the state budget crisis. With the plan now in place, considerable work remains. These include setting priorities, establishing metrics and indicators of quality, achieving consistency across extant planning documents, and aligning the plan with budgetary allocations. Given the current economic challenges to the California State University (CSU) system, the Commission expects senior leadership to give priority to finalizing and following a plan that is fully developed, dynamic and yet attentive to the institutional culture. This engagement will be especially important with respect to the CSU Online initiative and CSUF’s plans for growth on the Irvine campus, both of which would benefit from disaggregated data from the assessment of their effectiveness. (CFRs 1.3, 4.1-4.3, 4.7 and 4.8)

Assessing and improving student learning. The University has made progress with the assessment of student learning, including establishing new institution-wide outcomes. As the team noted in its report, “By articulating institution-wide learning outcomes, the institution has improved its capacity to develop and evaluate student learning assessments and to make use of results for improved student outcomes.” Progress was demonstrated as well in the effective use of Program Performance Reviews (PPRs), the development and initial assessment of metrics in writing competency, and the sustained support for a variety of quality assurance processes, especially in Student Affairs. Significant work remains, however, in many areas, including: (1) the alignment of learning outcomes at all levels; (2) the further development of comprehensive annual assessment reports and PPRs; (3) creation of a mechanism for tracking improvements in student learning, pedagogy, and sharing best practices in assessment; and (4) continued coordination, monitoring and support for institution-wide assessment. (CFRs 1.2, 2.3-2.7, 4.4, 4.6-4.8)

Advancing student advising and improving graduation rates. The University has grappled with problematic student advisement procedures and performance since this issue was self-identified in the University’s 2007 Institutional Proposal, and the Commission has recognized

CSUF's diligent work over the last five years to improve advising and reduce lingering student dissatisfaction with these services. The Commission noted with concern indications of continuing challenges in advisement, especially in general education but also at the department level. Unevenness in the effectiveness of, and support for, student advisement remains, and the team recommended that CSUF should "analyze academic advising in the colleges for best practices, create closer connections between colleges and the Academic Advisement Center, and provide more adequate staff and resources" at all levels. The Commission expects CSUF to address this recommendation as a high priority, noting that such initiatives could also improve undergraduate graduation and retention rates, which have been relatively unchanged over the last several entering cohorts. (CFRs 2.6, 2.12-2.14)

Addressing ongoing state funding challenges. While in no way a reflection on either CSUF's Educational Effectiveness Review or the University's leadership, the Commission noted continued declines in the financial resources provided by the State of California. Clearly, the state budget will have both short- and long-term impacts on the California State University campuses. The Commission was especially concerned about the potential consequences of funding reductions on educational programs and student learning, and the ability of the CSU campuses to sustain academic quality. Although the Commission recognized CSUF's many strategic efforts "to smooth the transition to lower budgets and to transform what would have been unanticipated shocks to student, faculty, and staff," the University is advised to continue managing these reductions in such a way that educational effectiveness remains a priority, and to report on the ways in which it is addressing this challenge in its next interaction with WASC. (CFRs 3.5, 4.1-4.3)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness Review report and reaffirm the accreditation of California State University, Fullerton.
2. Schedule the University's next comprehensive review with the off-site review in spring 2019 and the visit tentatively scheduled for fall 2019.
3. Request an Interim Report in spring 2015 on the issues cited in the EER report: (1) strategic planning, especially as it relates to setting priorities, metrics and milestones and the allocation of limited resources; (2) assessment of student learning across the University, including data gathered and analyzed for determining the effectiveness and the future role of off-campus and distance education; (3) student advising, especially as it relates to improving graduation and retention rates; and (4) updates on budgets and financial plans in view of declining state funding. Progress should be demonstrated, as defined above.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that California State University, Fullerton 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

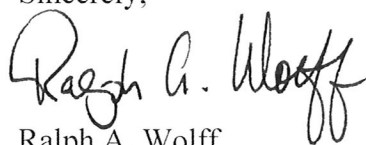
review, the institution is expected to continue its progress, particularly with respect to educational effectiveness and student learning.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to Chancellor Charles Reed and the chair of the CSU Board of Trustees in one week.

In keeping with WASC policy adopted in November 2011, this letter and the underlying team report also will be posted on the WASC website in approximately one week. If you wish to post a response to the letter and/or team report on your own website, WASC will also post a link to that response on its website. Any link that you wish to provide should be forwarded to the attention of Teri Cannon so that it may be included on the WASC website. As noted in the Commission policy, team reports and action letters are foundational for institutional accountability and improvement. Institutions are expected to disseminate these documents throughout the institution for the purposes of promoting ongoing engagement and improvement and encouraging internal communications about specific issues identified in team reports and action letters.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that the University undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WASC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while assuring public accountability, and we are grateful for your continued support of our process. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ralph A. Wolff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ralph" being more prominent.

Ralph A. Wolff
President

RW/kb

cc: Linda Johnsrud, Commission Chair
Ed Trotter, ALO
Bob Linscheid, Board Chair
Charles Reed, CSU Chancellor
Members of the EER team
WASC Liaisons: Barbara Gross Davis/Keith Bell