

February 4, 2016

Dr. Horace Mitchell  
President  
California State University, Bakersfield  
9001 Stockdale Highway  
Bakersfield, CA 93311-1022

Dear President Mitchell:

At its meeting by conference call on January 15, 2016, a panel of the Interim Report Committee (IRC) convened to consider the Interim Report submitted by California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB) on November 1, 2015. The panel reviewed the Interim Report and supporting materials, the Commission letter of March 8, 2012, and the Educational Effectiveness team report dated November 16-18, 2011.

The panel appreciated the opportunity to discuss the report with Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Jenny Zorn; Vice Provost and ALO David Schechter; Professor Steven Daniels; Associate Vice President James Drnek; Dean Kathleen Knutzen; Assistant Vice President Kris Krishnan; Administrative Assistant Linda Mikita; Associate Vice President Jacqueline Mimms; Vice President Thom Davis; Representative of Associated Students Inc Jennifer Sanchez; and Executive Assistant to the President Evelyn Young. The conversation was very informative and helped the panelists better understand the progress the institution has made in addressing the areas cited in the Commission letter.

The panel was extremely impressed with CSUB's Interim Report: it was well written, well organized, clearly focused, thoughtful, and comprehensive. The panel also praised the considerable improvement that has taken place since the Educational Effectiveness Review in 2011: the maturation of a robust infrastructure for ongoing assessment; the successful implementation of a carefully developed plan to address retention and graduation rates; the strong linkages now in place between strategic goals and allocation of resources; the significant efforts to diversify CSUB's sources of revenue; and the demonstrated commitment, at all levels of the university, to data-driven and evidence-based decision-making.

The March 8, 2012 Commission letter identified several areas that required attention and further development by CSUB:

1. Assessment

- Status of program level assessment across departments
- Progress in assessing university-level learning outcomes
- Progress in assessment of student learning at the graduate level

2. Retention and Graduation

- Description of efforts to strengthen and monitor retention and graduation rates
- Results of efforts to improve retention and graduation rates

3. Strategic Planning and Allocation of Resources

- Metrics or milestones for evaluating completion of the strategic plan
- Description of how resource allocation aligns with the institution's strategic priorities

The Interim Report Committee noted significant progress in each of these areas.

- a. **Assessment.** CSUB provided ample evidence of its educational effectiveness: impressive systems are in place for regularly collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and reviewing assessment data at the undergraduate and graduate levels; the institution has clear university level goals for student learning and the means to measure them; student progress in meeting these goals is carefully tracked; and General Education has its own assessment mechanisms. The panel was pleased to hear about the plans for an assessment newsletter that will disseminate across campus promising practices and successful strategies. The panel praised CSUB for creating a well-crafted assessment process that is faculty “owned” and that integrates quality assurance practices into the fabric of the university. (CFRs 1.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.11)
- b. **Retention and graduation.** CSUB has developed a detailed eight-point plan to improve undergraduate retention and graduation rates. The university has instituted a number of strategies designed to better prepare students for college level work and to intervene early on if students experience difficulties. CSUB has also set specific goals for improving aggregated and disaggregated retention and graduation rates, and the institution benchmarks itself against peer universities. CSUB is carefully monitoring the effectiveness of these strategies and reported that the number of first year students considered at risk has been reduced. The panel commended the university for recognizing that transfer students and first time full time students have different at risk profiles and for addressing their unique needs with different types of services. (CFRs 2.10-2.13)
- c. **Strategic planning and allocation of resources.** The panel appreciated the thorough and detailed report on the university’s strategic plan: the objectives, metrics, timelines, and benchmarks. The panel praised CSUB for linking planning and budgeting and for tying resource allocation to the university’s values and beliefs. Of special note is the manner in which CSUB has handled financial reductions in such a way that the university retains its core values. (CFRs 4.1- 4.3, 4.5- 4.7)

After discussion of the progress that has been made by California State University, Bakersfield in addressing areas cited by the Commission, the panel acted to:

1. Receive the Interim Report.
2. Require no further interaction with WSCUC until the time of California State University, Bakersfield’s Mid-Cycle Review (scheduled for spring 2016) and its comprehensive review (Offsite Review scheduled for spring 2019; Accreditation Visit scheduled for fall 2019).
3. Recommend that CSUB continue its efforts in assessment, retention and graduation, and strategic planning and allocation of resources, and that the university include in its institutional report for its comprehensive review the following:
  - a. *Assessment:* Review the types of measures departments are using to assess institutional learning outcomes and ensure they meet university benchmarks or performance indicators. The goal is to increase consistency of measurement across departments and to emphasize direct assessment of student learning. (CFRs 1.2, 2.3, 2.4)
  - b. *Retention and graduation:* Pay particular attention to programs, strategies, and activities to reduce the gap between African American students and other racial and ethnic groups. (CFRs 1.2, 2.10, 2.13)

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The panel, again, reaffirms the hard work and important steps that California State University, Bakersfield has taken to address the issues that were the focus of the Commission letter. The Interim Report Committee looks forward to the institution's continued progress.

Please contact me if you have questions about this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Gross Davis".

Barbara Gross Davis, Ph.D.  
Vice President

cc: David Schechter, ALO  
Members of the Interim Report Committee