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Ralph A. Wolff

March 3, 2010

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

Dear President Mitchell:

At its meeting on February 17-19, 2010, the Commission considered the report of the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) team that conducted the visit to California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB) on October 26-28, 2009. The Commission also reviewed the Capacity and Preparatory Review report submitted by CSUB prior to the visit. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the CPR with you and your colleagues, Provost Soraya Coley, Accreditation Liaison Officer Curt Guaglianone, Interim Associate Vice President Carl Kemnitz, Associate Vice President Laura Hecht, Interim Dean Edwin Sasaki, and Faculty/Assessment Fellow Andreas Gebauer. Your observations were very helpful.

CSUB's Institutional Proposal outlined two themes for the CPR: "University Alignment: Achieving Educational Effectiveness," and "Campus Culture: Achieving Sustainable Excellence." CSUB's report was complete, well organized and clearly addressed these two important themes. Especially noteworthy is the extensive involvement of the faculty, administration and staff in several working groups and forums related to the review. The visiting team reported progress on developing institutional learning outcomes ("Marks of a CSUB Student"), and student learning goals. CSUB demonstrated that it had effectively met the goals of the second theme by clearly articulating the goal of excellence to the wider community and by creating a climate that promotes transparency and community engagement. The Commission looks forward to the university's continuing development of these two themes in the Educational Effectiveness Review.

The Commission endorses the commendations and recommendations of the team. In particular, the Commission commends CSUB for its transparency and engagement with the campus and local communities as it has refined its vision and mission and established strategic plans with clear goals and objectives. Effective financial management and budgeting transparency have also served CSUB well and are ever more important during the current state financial crisis.

The Commission also wishes to acknowledge the work that CSUB has done to address the areas cited for improvement in its last action letter, issued in 2000. Substantial progress has been made in all areas, including developing plans that

support student centeredness as a fundamental principle; making good progress on assessment at both the program and institutional levels; making technology upgrades that “will serve [CSUB] well into the future;” developing goals and objectives that support diversity; and increasing the diversity of the faculty.

At the same time, the team cited a number of areas for continued attention and development, and the Commission expects to see progress on each of these at the time of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER). These include:

**Assessment of Student Learning.** CSUB is urged to make more rapid progress in the development and implementation of a comprehensive institutional assessment plan and program review process. Changes to the program review process suggested by the team should be considered and this process should be aligned with planning and resource allocation. The Commission acknowledges that the university has developed institutional learning outcomes, is conducting effective academic program scans, and is assessing student learning in many programs. CSUB now should develop processes to assess student learning at the institutional level and to expand assessment to all programs. By the time of the EER, CSUB needs to be able to provide evidence of student learning and achievement throughout the institution, and demonstrate that this evidence is being used to improve student learning. As noted by the team, “build[ing] leadership for assessment activities” will be key to the success of this work. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.7, 2.10, 4.6)

**Faculty Development and Support.** In the current economic environment, it will be a challenge for CSUB to protect its investment in qualified faculty and staff by providing adequate support and ongoing development. Continued work is needed in professional development and diversification in order for the university to reach its goal of “faculty and academic excellence.” In addition, care must be taken to provide ongoing professional development for key members of the faculty who have administrative responsibilities in academic departmental organization and functioning, especially during a time of budget constraints. Finally, best practices must be adhered to both in the development of online instruction and for the benefit of faculty teaching such courses. (CFRs 3.3, 3.4)

**Student Success.** The university has struggled historically to achieve acceptable retention and graduation rates. While recognizing recent improvement in these rates overall and progress in “enhancing the quality of the student experience,” the team noted that the retention and graduation rates are, by some comparisons, below expectations, especially for several groups of students. The Commission appreciated the work that the university has done to begin to identify and remove barriers to student enrollment and retention, and to develop programs supporting student success. The Commission urges the university to continue this work, including addressing the CSU Trustees’ student success initiative, so that more improvement can be achieved. (CFRs 2.10, 2.13, 2.14, 4.5)

The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Capacity and Preparatory Review report and continue the accreditation of California State University, Bakersfield.

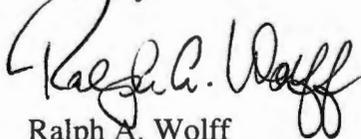
2. Reschedule the Educational Effectiveness Review from spring 2011 to fall 2011 in order to provide additional time for the university to address the issues cited in this letter and the team report. The Institutional Presentation is due 12 weeks before the scheduled review.
3. Request that the institution incorporate its response to the issues raised in this action letter and to the major recommendations of the CPR team report into its Educational Effectiveness Review report. You may include this analysis in an appendix to the EER report or incorporate it into the report.

By extending the timeframe until the Educational Effectiveness Review, the Commission hopes to provide the institution with time to build upon its progress to date. By the time of the EER, the university must be able to demonstrate that it is fully engaged in determining its educational effectiveness at all levels of assessment, including the enhancement of resources, the professional development of assessment leadership, and evidence of concrete results.

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 within 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.

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,



Ralph A. Wolff  
President and Executive Director

RW/tc/kb

cc: Sherwood Lingenfelter, Commission Chair  
Herbert L. Carter, Chair of CSU Board of Trustees  
Charles Reed, CSU Chancellor  
Curtis Guaglianone, ALO  
Members of the CPR team