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PRESIDENT
Ralph A. Wolff

March 7, 2011

Mary E. Lyons
President
University of San Diego
5998 Alcalá Park
San Diego, CA 92110-2942

Dear President Lyons:

At its meeting on February 16-18, 2011, the Commission considered the report of the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) team that conducted the visit to the University of San Diego (USD) on October 12-14, 2010. The Commission also reviewed the CPR and exhibits submitted by USD prior to the visit. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you; Julie Sullivan, Executive Vice President and Provost; Andrew Allen, Associate Provost and Accreditation Liaison Officer; Carole Huston, Associate Dean in the College of Arts and Sciences; and Cel Johnson, Executive Director of Institutional Research and Planning. Your observations were very helpful.

USD's institutional proposal adopted the three major recommendations from the 2001 Commission letter as the themes for the CPR: defining, evaluating, and ensuring educational effectiveness; advancing diversity in structures, climate, and curriculum; and creating and sustaining innovative learning spaces. USD addressed all three themes seriously and made sustained progress in each area.

The Commission commends USD for maintaining financial strength during the recent economic downturn, achieving balanced budgets, and adhering to effective strategic decision-making priorities. USD's financial strength enabled the funding of increased levels of student scholarships, the construction of several state-of-the-art buildings, enhancements to technology infrastructure, and continued high levels of support for faculty and staff. Campus morale has remained high, thanks to the good working relationships established among a cohesive administration, committed board, dedicated faculty and staff, and a highly motivated student body, all supportive of the mission and values of the University. As the WASC team found, "Clearly, there is a stable and well-functioning system in place; this can be utilized to build upon the substantial momentum of recent years."

The Commission endorsed the recommendations of the CPR team and wished to emphasize the following areas for continued attention and development:

A Culture of Assessment. While USD has made major strides toward developing a culture of assessment, further advances are expected for the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER). A new Center for Educational Excellence, the appointment of faculty assessment leaders in most schools, and the collaboration of assessment leaders on the University Assessment Committee constitute a good beginning. Student learning outcomes have been adopted at the program level, and now need to be developed and deployed across the institution at the course level. In keeping with the recommendations of the team, general education student learning outcomes could be reduced in number and further refined. USD's outstanding technology infrastructure can now support the development of learning outcomes for technology. By the time of the EER, plans should also be in place for all USD programs to engage in program review in keeping with the Standards, rather than relying on external programmatic reviews, which are not always consistent with WASC expectations for program review. As the team recommended, "USD will need to provide more direct evidence that the full program review process has been embedded into the culture, and that program change is evidence-based." USD would also benefit from tying the elements of assessment into a more comprehensive and unified plan through an "assess the assessment plan," as recommended by the team. (CFRs 2.3, 2.6, 2.7, 4.4, 4.6)

Implementation of Diversity Initiatives. USD has focused much attention on analyzing diversity in terms of hiring practices, student recruitment and retention, campus climate, and curriculum, and has created a Center for Inclusion and Diversity. As the team notes, "a large number of these strategies are very recent and there has been no time to analyze their effectiveness or even their reach." While faculty and administrative diversity has increased, the same cannot be said for student racial-ethnic diversity or the persistence and graduation rates of under-represented groups, which lag behind other groups. The Commission recognizes that many years will be needed for the full fruition of USD's new strategies to promote diversity, but encourages USD to continue its efforts. By the time of the EER visit, USD should be able to show some evidence of the impact of the initiatives that have been developed to enhance diversity, to promote success of diverse students, faculty, and staff, and to create a positive climate for the whole USD community. (CFRs 1.5, 2.10, 3.1, 3.2)

The Commission acted to:

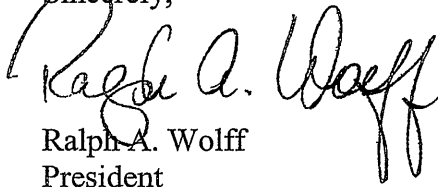
1. Receive the Capacity and Preparatory Review report and continue the accreditation of the University of San Diego.
2. Proceed with the scheduled Educational Effectiveness Review on March 21-23, 2012. The Institutional Report is due 12 weeks prior to the scheduled visit.
3. Request that the institution 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 your Educational Effectiveness report or incorporate it into the report.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of the University of San Diego's governing board in 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ralph A. Wolff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "R".

Ralph A. Wolff
President

RW/DO/cf

cc: Linda Johnsrud, Commission Chair
Andrew Allen, ALO
Darlene Marcos Shiley, Chair of the Board of Trustees
Members of the CPR team
Richard Osborn, WASC Vice President