



March 6, 2001

Alice B. Hayes  
President  
University of San Diego  
5998 Alcalá Park  
San Diego, CA 92110-2492

Dear President Hayes:

At its meeting February 21-23, 2001, the Commission considered the report submitted by the evaluation team that visited the University of San Diego on November 28 - December 1, 2000 and the self study prepared by the University for this comprehensive visit. The Commission was grateful to have Frank Lazarus, Provost and Vice President; and you representing the institution during its discussion.

The Commission wishes to acknowledge that there is much to be proud of at the University of San Diego. Faculty, students, staff, administrators, and Board members are committed to the University, its mission, and their responsibilities. During the interval since the last comprehensive visit new leadership has been established at the University with a new President and Provost/Vice President. The transition in leadership has offered the opportunity to recommit the University's constituents to a common vision. The Commission agrees with the plans to revisit the University's strategic plan at the mid-point of its anticipated life-span. Given the change in University leadership since its formulation and the dynamic environmental setting the University of San Diego must serve, the planning process will offer a timely opportunity to further engage the institution's constituencies in visioning and planning its future, as well as reinforcing their commitment and support. Because development of the 2005 strategic plan will set a foundation for the next WASC review, which will be under the new accreditation Standards, the University may find opportunities for these processes to strengthen each other.

The University is to be commended for the seriousness with which it approached the results of the Values Survey, using it to inform action on core areas such as respect for persons and diversity. The sincerity and strength of the University's follow-up certainly add to collective efforts directed toward institutional improvement. The Commission also notes the progress made in addressing issues outlined during the 1992 review, including clarifying issues of academic freedom, and the attention devoted to issues related to institutional governance.

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Overall, the team and the Commission are impressed with the solid financial condition of the University and its sound financial management, its clear perceptions of the challenges ahead, the quality of its academic programming, its commitment to high academic standards, and its dedication to teaching and learning. The University is especially commended for the construction of the self study in a manner that incorporated four themes important for institutional improvement: the role of ethics and core values in the life of the institution; the meaning of the Teacher-Scholar model as a paradigm for academic excellence; the assessment of learning outcomes; and the comprehensive character of the student development program. The Commission commends the University for a self-study process that has been helpful to the institution in examining its progress and planning future actions in these areas.

The Commission endorses the major recommendations in the visiting team report. Throughout the report is woven thoughtful advice regarding further strengthening the institution for its future development as a comprehensive university. Especially noted by the Commission are comments and recommendations concerning explicit support and encouragement for continued progress with recent initiatives such as the Teacher-Scholar model, strengthening faculty participation in university governance, and taking action to address important issues learned from the Values Survey. Positive headway has been made in improving communication throughout the campus community and the Commission encourages continued attention to this important area, particularly in addressing the meaning and institutional implications of the Teacher-Scholar model. The Commission also supports the team's encouragement to the faculty and administration that the University's general education program be revisited.

The team report and the self study provide excellent insight about the University of San Diego's progress and current condition relative to the last comprehensive visit in 1992. There are several recommendations the Commission wishes to highlight.

**Diversity:** This has been a recurring issue in WASC reviews at the University of San Diego. There has been significant progress made in planning, partly aided through support by Irvine Foundation grants, and the team finds evidence of genuine institutional intellectual and moral commitment to assuring that diversity is an integral component of institutional culture at the University of San Diego. However, the Commission also notes there is need for more progress in implementing plans. The urgency to address this issue is exacerbated since the University plans to become more selective with respect to student admissions. The Commission urges the University to transform into an action document its comprehensive campus-wide draft Plan for Diversity and Inclusion and closely monitor its implementation.

**Assessment:** While the University has devoted considerable attention to implementing assessment activities, leading to substantial progress in this area, it appears that much activity is yet in the data and information gathering stage. The Commission urges the University to move forward diligently with its plans to strengthen a culture of assessment across the campus. There is need for additional progress at identifying the key questions about student learning and institutional performance, collecting and analyzing appropriate data, and using the analysis to guide program and institutional improvement. The Commission endorses the spirit of the team's observation that "... the University focus its assessment efforts on student learning,

however and wherever it may occur, and the creation of a stronger sense of both an intellectual and learning community.”

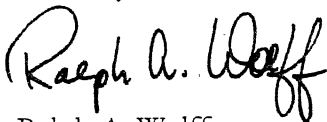
**Technology:** The University has made significant progress in advancing the campus community’s access to modern electronic communications and computing technologies. With the relatively recent appointment of a Chief Information Officer, who is assigned the responsibility for academic and administrative computing and media services, more coordinated planning and implementation of services is in progress. It is imperative for the institution’s ability to meet current and future technology needs that the University direct attention toward developing an academic technology plan that is driven by the teaching, learning, and research needs of the faculty and students, and is consistent with the longer range academic goals of the institution.

The Commission joins the visiting team in complimenting the University for the comprehensive nature and candor of its self study, and the organization and support of the team visit. The Commission has acted to:

1. Reaffirm the Accreditation of the University of San Diego.
2. Schedule the proposal for the two-stage review to be due May 1, 2008. Schedule the Preparatory Review for fall 2010 and the Educational Effectiveness Review for fall 2011.

The next scheduled review of the institution will occur under the *Handbook of Accreditation 2001*, which involves significant new Standards and substantially different expectations for Institutional Presentations under the new review cycle. The Commission urges the University to review the new *Handbook* and to assess how institutional evidence can be developed prior to the next accreditation review that will make the new process less burdensome and more useful. Please contact me if you have any questions or comments about this letter and the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Ralph A. Wolff  
Executive Director

cc: Marilyn P. Sutton  
Francis M. Lazarus  
Members of the Team  
Fred H. Dorer

RW/brn