



June 18, 2008

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

Dear President Lyons:

At its June 12, 2008 meeting, a panel of the Proposal Review Committee considered the Institutional Proposal from the University of San Diego for its reaffirmation of accreditation review. Members of the panel asked me to express their appreciation for your participation in the telephone conference call, and for that of your colleagues Julie Sullivan, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost; Carole Huston, ALO and Director of the Center for Educational Excellence; Cel Johnson, Executive Director, Institutional Research and Planning; Chris Procello, Assessment Coordinator; Andrew Allen, Incoming Associate Provost and Interim Dean of the School of Business Administration; and Julia Bemiss, Executive Assistant. Your collective responses to the panel members' questions and comments were helpful in assisting them to understand your institutional context and the approach of your proposal for the comprehensive review.

As I communicated to Carole Huston by telephone on June 12th, the panel acted to accept the proposal in its present form. The panel commends the institution and its team for submitting a strong document, one that reflects broad and inclusive participation from the institution's various constituent groups. The panel found the proposal's narrative to be clear and well written and appreciated the thoughtful integration of the WASC Standards and Criteria for Review into the substance and text of the proposal. The panel was also gratified to observe the clear linkages drawn between the university's plans for the Capacity and Preparatory and Educational Effectiveness Reviews. Finally, the panel asked me to commend USD for the way in which the institution has incorporated issues raised in previous Commission action letters into the university's foci for the reaffirmation process.

After examining the proposal and conversing with your colleagues, the panel made several observations that it would like to share with the university:

The panel suggests that as USD moves through the comprehensive review process, the institution think intentionally about how to use the new program review process in concert with other efforts to assess student and organizational learning. As an example, the program review process could be useful in encouraging the collection and use of actual student work in assessment practices. A second and related topic for consideration by the university is the suggestion to be mindful of the need to continue

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to clarify and sharpen the outcomes articulated for student learning as more systematic assessments are undertaken, evidence is collected, and reflection on student learning becomes integral part of institutional culture.

Outcomes associated with institutional goals for the Educational Effectiveness Review also remain somewhat fuzzy. The panel urges USD to be mindful of the fact that the institution will need to go beyond the policies and procedures described in the proposal. At the time of the EER visit, the Commission will expect the institution to demonstrate that it has defined actionable student learning outcomes that have been (or can be) used to make real, measurable improvements in student learning.

As plans for the comprehensive review process proceed, USD is reminded that it will need to ensure that off campus and distance education programs are thoroughly integrated into the university's comprehensive review processes.

Finally, the university is reminded that in the action letter of July 7, 2006 approving the Ph.D. in Leadership Studies, the Commission requested that USD:

...incorporate an assessment of the program in its next comprehensive review cycle, including an analysis of the impact of the program on students pursuing different career objectives.

The proposal now becomes the framework for the accreditation review process and represents a plan of action and commitment by the institution. The proposal will be shared with the visiting teams for both the Capacity and Preparatory Review and the Educational Effectiveness Review, and with the Commission following each review. It is understood that adjustments in the activities undertaken under the proposal will be made as implementation occurs. Major changes to the proposal, such as in the direction or focus of institutional activities for the accreditation review process, are to be approved in advance by Commission staff.

As you know, the Commission adopted changes to the Standards for Accreditation and to the Institutional Review Process this year. These changes are posted on our website at www.wascenior.org. We encourage you and your staff to review these changes to see how they might impact your work as set forth in your Proposal. We will be sending you a letter during the summer that explains how to address these changes in your reports for the Capacity and Preparatory and Educational Effectiveness Reviews.

The panel again commends the University of San Diego for a job well done.

I wish you well and look forward to working with you on this review cycle.

Sincerely,



Michelle Behr
Assistant Director

Cc: Carole L Huston, Director of the Center for Educational Excellence Office
Proposal Review Committee