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Mary Ellen Petrisko

March 7, 2014

Henry T. Yang
Chancellor
University of California, Santa Barbara
Santa Barbara, CA 93106

Dear Chancellor Yang:

At its meeting February 19-21, 2014, the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) team that conducted the visit to the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) October 8-10, 2013. The Commission also had access to the EER report prepared by UCSB prior to the visit, the documents relating to the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) visit conducted in fall 2011, and your December 18, 2013, response to the visiting team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you and your colleagues: Joel Michaelsen, Interim Executive Vice Chancellor, and Mary Nisbet, Dean of Undergraduate Education and Accreditation Liaison Officer. Your comments were helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations.

UCSB's institutional proposal outlined two themes for the CPR which were later modified with the approval of WSCUC staff: 1) analysis of educational effectiveness at the institutional level: defining and assessing general education learning outcomes; 2) assessing student learning in the major; and 3) excellence in graduate education. UCSB also focused attention on two special topic essays: 1) student success, and 2) academic program review. The team found that UCSB used the review as an opportunity "to pursue questions that matter deeply on their campus" which resulted in impressive progress forward on each theme and special topic. They also concluded that the "level of faculty engagement was strong and broadly representative."

The Commission's action letter of March 8, 2012, following the CPR, highlighted two major issues for special attention during the two year interval between the CPR and EER visits: 1) building the capacity for assessing student learning and demonstrating educational effectiveness; and 2) preparing graduate students for non-academic fields. The team concluded that while many of the initiatives addressing these two areas were new, UCSB had "responded carefully and thoughtfully" to the CPR team report and Commission action letter resulting in

“substantial, broad, and meaningful” progress by creating systems and momentum that would last into the future.

The Commission endorsed the commendations in the team report and wished to highlight three areas particularly:

- 1. Development of learning outcomes for General Education and all undergraduate and graduate programs.** One of the most impressive results of the accreditation process has been completion of learning outcomes, which has been carried out in the institution’s General Education (GE) program and that set the tone for all undergraduate and graduate programs having completed this task. Rather than just meeting an administrative dictate to have this goal accomplished by the time of the EER visit, UCSB engaged in processes that have the buy-in of faculty. In the case of GE, the Undergraduate Council appointed a General Education Work Group to carry out multiple reviews of the outcomes by engaging the entire campus before the Council gave its approval. The result is that the team discovered that these are now regarded as “representing broader, institutional-level learning outcomes, or goals that the University would want to articulate for all of its students” – goals that are “ambitious, meaningful, and thoughtful” and “faculty-led and faculty-owned.” The Commission particularly commends the work done on the assessment of the writing requirement of GE. UCSB has created a model for institutions required to assess writing communication as one of the core competencies of WSCUC’s 2013 institutional review process. UCSB undertook this work even before the new requirement for core competencies was adopted by the Commission. Similar efforts were made to define program learning outcomes for all undergraduate and graduate programs. Instead of just approving the learning outcomes submitted by each program, the Academic Senate often required further work, which demonstrates the seriousness with which this work was taken. Assessment processes for ensuring that the outcomes are measured are also in place through the creation of a Council on Assessment and additional permanent staff positions to oversee assessment. One of the team’s concerns about the long-term impact of this new work was allayed by the infrastructure and personnel that were put in place to maintain momentum, since much of what has been adopted has taken place in the last two years. The team found evidence that these outcomes and assessment processes are now part of the institution’s DNA. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 4.4)
- 2. Commitment to undergraduate education.** Unlike most research universities that are part of the American Association of Universities, UCSB has a relatively small graduate program for its size. While wanting to grow the graduate program size,

UCSB has never lost its focus on meeting the academic and student service needs of its undergraduate students. While some research universities assign adjunct and beginning professors to teach large undergraduate courses, UCSB continues to have its most experienced professors teach these classes, which has resulted in consistently high performance levels among its students. The University has also put into place many academic and co-curricular programs that stress its commitment to its undergraduate students. (CFRs 2.4, 2.10)

3. **Student success.** In spite of being located in a very high-income area, 29% of UCSB's students come from low-income, first generation students (known as Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) students) and almost 25% of its student population comes from a Hispanic background. More remarkable than these numbers is the success these students are experiencing as a result of many initiatives by UCSB to enable them to be successful as demonstrated both in retention and graduation rates exceeding peer institutions. Of particular note are the graduation rates of all transfer students, which increased from 41% in 1999 to 70% in 2010 of those completing degrees within two years of matriculation. The gap between EOP and non-EOP student is also narrowing. Special mention should be given to the Campus Learning Assistance Services (CLAS) effort. The Commission gives special commendation for how effectively the campus is using data coordinated by the Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment (IRPA) office to develop intervention strategies to help at-risk students "made possible by the collaborative culture that pervades the UC Santa Barbara campus." The numerous co-curricular opportunities made available to students to bolster student success also deserve special commendation. (CFRs 2.3, 2.6, 2.10, 2.12, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6)

The Commission endorsed the team report and highlighted the following areas for additional attention and development:

1. **Timeline for assessment of all learning outcomes in the General Education program.** While commending UCSB for how it has approached the assessment of writing, the Commission shares the team's concern that target dates and timelines need to be established for assessing all GE learning outcomes. The framework used to assess writing, while far-reaching in its impact, may be too complicated and time intensive to apply to the other competencies in the near future. Accordingly, the Commission is concerned how what was learned from the assessment of writing will be transferred to other outcomes. By the time of the Interim Report in 2018, the Commission will expect several more GE learning outcomes to be assessed and a

timeline created with target dates and goals for the remainder. (CFRs 2.3, 2.6, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7)

2. **Continued progress on program-level assessment of learning outcomes.** The Commission notes that some departments have engaged in assessment activities as a result of grants, including Economics and Accounting, Biology, and History. They are concerned that perhaps the most motivated programs have engaged in these activities and that it will take more than volunteers to engage many more departments. They share the team's concern that "the ability to move programmatic assessment efforts forward may be at risk, especially given the fledgling level of development of many of the assessment plans." Because UCSB has relied so much on volunteers, the Commission urges UCSB to find ways to keep the momentum going and to provide assistance to extend the promising initial results to the remaining programs. The two groups tasked with this assignment – the Council on Assessment and the Assessment Research Group – may need to become more proactive in their efforts. At the present time, the 8-year cycle for program reviews, which requires assessment of program learning outcomes, may be too long to wait for some programs. But the Commission leaves that to institutional judgment. By the time of the Interim Report in 2018, the Commission expects to see evidence that more programs have developed sound assessment processes, have completed the process, and have made changes as a result of the findings. Similar to the assessment of GE learning outcomes, the Commission expects a timeline to be created with target dates and goals for all programs. (CFRs 2.3, 2.6, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7)
3. **Program review.** The Commission commends UCSB for its revised program review process, which the team describes as "a seemingly powerful and effective means of ensuring that appropriate attention is paid to assessment" and which is the major new element in the new process. However, no program reviews had been finished under the revised process at the time of the EER review. The Commission supports the team's concern that if the new program review process is to be seen as the primary motivator to assess program learning outcomes, the expectations "must be every bit as rigorous as those for other elements of the review" and that programs cannot wait until just before the 8-year review to initiate their efforts. At the time of the Interim Report in 2018, the Commission expects several program reviews to be completed with evidence of how assessment of program learning outcomes has been incorporated into the process and what changes have been made as a result. (CFR 2.7)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness Review report and reaffirm the accreditation of the University of California, Santa Barbara for a period of ten years.
2. Schedule the next comprehensive review with the off-site review in spring 2023 and the visit in fall 2023.
3. Schedule a mid-cycle review for spring 2018:
http://www.wascsenior.org/resources/mid-cycle_review.
4. Request an Interim Report due November 1, 2018 to report progress on the following issues cited in this letter and in the EER team report: 1) an analysis of the revised program review process; 2) an update on progress in assessment of General Education learning outcomes; 3) an update on progress in program-level assessment of learning outcomes; and 4) evaluation of faculty and staff hiring and workload). Progress should be demonstrated as defined earlier in the letter.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that the University of California, Santa Barbara has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness and has successfully completed the three-stage review conducted under the 2008 Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review, the institution is expected to continue its progress with special attention placed on the topics included in the Interim Report.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to University of California President Janet Napolitano. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on UCSB's website and 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. The team report and the action letter will also be posted on the WSCUC website. If the institution wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WSCUC will post a link to that response.

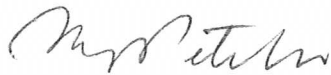
Please note that the Criteria for Review in this letter refer to the *2008 Handbook of Accreditation*. The *2008 Handbook* continues to be available on the WSCUC website at www.wascsenior.org.

As UCSB works on the issues cited above, it should be mindful of the expectations that it will need to meet at the time of its next comprehensive review, which will take place under the revised Standards of Accreditation and institutional review process in the *2013 Handbook of Accreditation*. These expectations build on past practice and will include, for example, student success, quality improvement processes such as assessment and program review, planning, and financial sustainability. However, the *2013 Handbook* also includes new foci: the meaning, quality, and integrity of degrees; student performance in core competencies at the time of graduation; and more visionary institutional planning for the “new ecology” of learning. The University will be well served to familiarize itself with the *2013 Handbook* and to approach its challenges in ways that will address both old and new expectations.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that UCSB undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WSCUC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while ensuring 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 of the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Mary Ellen Petrisko
President and Executive Director

MEP/gc

Cc: Harold Hewitt, WSCUC Chair
Mary Nisbet, ALO
Janet Napolitano, President, University of California System
Members of the EER Team
Richard Osborn, WSCUC Staff Liaison