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March 7, 2011

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James M. Rosser
President
California State University, Los Angeles
5151 State University Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90032-8508

Dear President Rosser:

At its meeting on February 16-18, 2011, the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) team that conducted the visit to California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA) on October 6-8, 2010. The Commission also had access to the Educational Effectiveness Review report prepared by CSULA prior to the visit, your December 17, 2010 response to the visiting team report, and the documents relating to the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) visit conducted on April 1-3, 2009. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you and your colleagues Vice President for Academic Affairs Cheryl Nay, and Associate Dean and Accreditation Liaison Officer Alan Muchlinski. Your comments were very helpful to the panel.

The institutional proposal for California State University, Los Angeles, outlined four themes for this comprehensive review: 1) Strategic Thinking and Planning for Enrollment and Resource Management, 2) Becoming a Teaching and Learning Community, 3) Supporting Student Learning, and 4) Promoting Students in Reaching Their Goals. The Commission recognized the institution's commitment to pursuing these themes during a time of economic challenges and acknowledged the team's observation that the EER process was transparent and "inclusive and involved many faculty, staff, students, and administrators."

The Commission's action letter of June 26, 2009 highlighted three major issues for special attention during the interval between the CPR and EER visits: assessment of student learning; student success; and research, scholarship, and creative activity. The team found that these issues were carefully addressed in appropriate sections of the University's EER report to WASC. The team also noted that "CSULA has clearly embraced a culture of evidence and seeks to become a fully engaged teaching and learning community. The establishment of institutional-level learning outcomes and student learning outcomes for programs and general education has been accomplished. Assessment plans have been promulgated, and assessment activities are being conducted." Relative to student success, the Commission was pleased to learn that "enrollment Management at CSULA is not merely managing the number of student FTE's and headcount. Strategic Enrollment Management is seen as planning for student success as well as the academic program growth and the required resources." The Commission acknowledged that CSULA's Graduation Initiative Team is working to enhance graduation rates with a focus on underrepresented minority groups, and it applauded the increased collaboration among student services units in an effort to approach holistically the needs of current and prospective students. Finally, the

Commission noted progress with respect to research, scholarship, creativity activity (RSCA). As stated in the team report: "A number of academic programs and majors include RSCA as a requirement for the degree and many departments make significant efforts to highlight student RSCA both on campus and within their disciplines at a state or national level."

California State University, Los Angeles is to be commended for clearly embracing a culture of evidence and seeking "to become a fully engaged teaching and learning community." The Commission sees these values lived out at CSULA in an increased commitment to assessment of student learning and educational effectiveness; "striking progress" on student learning outcomes assessment; a proactive Institutional Research office that partners with units at the institutional and program level; and improved guidelines for program review with the careful integration of outcomes assessment and annual reporting. Additionally, the Commission notes the effectiveness of the Enrollment Management Steering Committee in responding proactively and collaboratively to the challenges in achieving enrollment targets; maintaining the CSULA student profile; providing guidelines for remediation, transition, and balance in course offerings; and striving to build efficiencies across all units of the University.

The Commission endorses the nine recommendations of the EER team and wishes to emphasize the following areas for further attention and development:

Retention and Graduation Rates. The Commission acknowledges the challenge of managing enrollments and dramatically improving graduation rates in a time of uncertainty and transformation in the California State University system. The visiting team observed that there is a strong current in the CSULA community "to pursue the fundamental goals of the University and to focus … on student success." The University clearly has put in place mechanisms and collaborative structures that have the potential to improve retention and completion rates. The system-wide Graduation Initiative, coupled with a robust intervention design already in place at CSULA, should provide needed improvements in retaining and graduating all student groups: new freshmen, transfers, and especially under-represented minorities, who have lower than average graduation rates. The Commission found promise in several of CSULA's approaches to improving completion, including building close working relationships with feeder community colleges, promoting faculty mentoring, establishing the Honors College, and requiring students to declare majors. The Commission urges the University to move forward with the proposed model for academic advisement, noting that improved advising holds promise for a direct impact on student satisfaction and completion. (CFRs 2.10, 2.12-2.14, 3.8, 4.1-4.3)

Strategic Planning. Under the duress of the current budget crisis in the State of California and the concomitant challenges of managing enrollment and academic offerings, the University has undergone a period of planning in which it needed to find immediate solutions. The visiting team reported that "the campus had deactivated the Strategic Planning Committee and in its stead placed more reliance on the President's executive leadership group and [other strategic groups]." Although this process has promoted nimbleness and effective collaborative initiatives relative to the University's direction, it also has hampered vital strategic planning. Given the ongoing challenges presented by the decline in state funding, a comprehensive approach seems most beneficial to the institution at this time. Consequently, the Commission urges CSULA to revitalize and coordinate planning efforts, especially attending to the University's strategic plan. (CFRs 1.3, 3.8, 4.1-4.3)

Assessment. As highlighted in the team report, CSULA has given intense and productive attention to systems of student learning assessment and program review. The visiting team noted that "there is widespread interest in and acceptance of the role and value of an institutional focus on educational effectiveness." The Commission commends CSULA for this progress and, at the same time, urges further

work on the recently adopted institutional learning outcomes (ILOs). The next steps will include alignment of the ILOs with programs and general education, implementation of an assessment plan, gathering and analysis of data, and use of results for institutional improvement are vital next steps. Likewise, adequate human and financial resources will be essential in support of effective assessment efforts in both curricular and co-curricular units. (CFRs 2.3-2.7, 2.10-2.11, 4.4-4.7)

Improving Student Support Services. Supportive student services have a substantial impact on persistence, retention, and graduation rates, especially for first-time and transfer students who face particular challenges when transitioning into the university. CSULA has recognized the need for increased attention to student support services and advising. The visiting team noted the University's intention to "use new assessment measures linking student learning to administrative process improvements" and "to address its goals of significant improvement and satisfaction of student services." The Commission urges CSULA to build on processes already begun in order to improve and enhance student services by utilizing assessment instruments, streamlining services, and establishing exemplary advising and customer service. (CFRs 1.7-1.8, 2.10-2.11, 2.13-2.14)

Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity. CSULA is to be commended for promoting student research, scholarship and creative activity; a high-impact practice that has potential to improve retention, graduation and student learning. The Commission was also pleased to learn from your written and oral report that CSULA has collected data on faculty and student engagement with RSCA. It recommends that the University proceed to develop a comprehensive approach to RSCA data collection and analysis that can demonstrate how RSCA connects to stated learning outcomes. CSULA would benefit by seeking to understand and document correlations with retention and graduation patterns and other indicators of student achievement. (CFRs 1.2, 2.8-2.9, 4.3-4.5)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness Review report and reaffirm the accreditation of California State University, Los Angeles.

2. Schedule the Capacity and Preparatory Review for fall 2018 and the Educational Effectiveness Review for spring 2020.

3. Request an Interim Report to be due on November 1, 2012, addressing the issues mentioned above. In particular, the report should demonstrate progress in improving retention and graduation rates; reactivating strategic planning and addressing decreased state funding; assessing student learning, especially in developing a plan to align and assess the newly adopted institutional learning outcomes; improving the effectiveness of student support services, including advising; and documenting the results of initiatives to promote research, scholarship and creative activity.

4. Proceed with the scheduled progress report on the EdD program, due on December 1, 2011, and the Special Visit on the EdD, to be conducted during fall 2014, pursuant to the Commission's letter of June 26, 2009.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that California State University, Los Angeles has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness, and has successfully completed the three-stage review conducted under the Standards of

Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review, the institution is expected to continue its progress, particularly with respect to educational effectiveness and student learning.

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 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,

Ralph A. Wolff
President

RW/KB/TC/aa

cc: Linda Johnsrud, Commission Chair
Alan Muchlinski, ALO
Charles Reed, Chancellor
Herbert Carter, Chair of the CSU Board of Trustees
Members of the EER team
Therese Cannon and Keith Bell