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PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Ralph A. Wolff

March 3, 2010

Timothy J. White
Chancellor
University of California, Riverside
900 University Avenue
Riverside, CA 92521-4009

Dear Chancellor White:

At its meeting on February 17-19, 2010, the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) team that conducted the visit to the University of California, Riverside (UCR) on October 27-29, 2009. The Commission also had access to the Educational Effectiveness Review report and exhibits submitted by UCR prior to the visit, the institution's January 11, 2010 response to the visiting team report, and the documents relating to the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) visit conducted in spring 2008. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you, Vice Provost David Fairris, and Academic Senate Chair Tony Norman. Your comments were helpful.

UCR's institutional proposal outlined three important themes for study and improvement during this comprehensive review: Learning within a Campus Community of Diversity; Growing and Improving Graduate and Professional Programs; and Improving Undergraduate Engagement, Experience, and Learning Outcomes. UCR addressed key research questions in each of these themes and approached the review in the spirit of inquiry and improvement. The resulting UCR reports were exceptionally well aligned with the selected themes and demonstrated progress toward the goals related to those themes. As noted by the team, the EER report was "well organized and written, was self-reflective, [and] included evidence of widespread faculty involvement." UCR utilized the review process to good effect, with the result that substantial progress was made in building campus understanding of, and systems for, assessment of student learning. The Commission especially acknowledges the team's observation that conducting the review "led to a much wider appreciation of educational effectiveness and the improvement of student learning."

The Commission's action letter of June 24, 2008 highlighted four areas for special attention during the interval between the CPR and EER visits: Strategic Planning, Student Learning and Assessment, Diversity, and Plans for Expansion of Graduate Programs. These issues align closely with the themes that UCR chose to address in its review. All of these issues were addressed in depth by the time of the EER; however, further attention to some of them will be needed within the next few years. These issues are set forth below.

UCR is commended for making substantial progress on assessment of student learning, improving the diversity of the faculty, continuing to prioritize support for diversity, establishing an effective collaboration between academic and student affairs, and focusing on student learning and success.

As noted above, UCR moved quickly and effectively to develop faculty expertise in, and support for, assessment and established outcomes for undergraduate programs and systems to support this work. Considerable effort on the part of the administration and faculty was expended to support the new emphasis on assessment at UCR.

UCR lives its stated commitment to diversity, with the most diverse student body in the University of California system. Collaboratively developed and effective program-based and campus-wide support systems have led to success in retaining and graduating students, helped to create a positive climate, and hold promise for more improvement. As noted by the team, UCR is positioned well to sustain its vision for diversity and “has achieved what few institutions are able to...” This work and the general spirit of student-centeredness on the campus are, to a large extent, the consequence of a healthy collaboration between student affairs and the faculty/academic affairs.

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

Assessment of Student Learning and Program Review. As noted by the team, “the university has provided faculty development on methods of assessment and ... every [undergraduate] department had developed student learning outcomes and chosen means of assessment...” Longstanding program review processes were revised to include results of assessment of student learning and a data collection system was established to record and document assessment activity and data. The work on these components of educational effectiveness demonstrates UCR’s commitment to assessment of student learning and to the creation of sound mechanisms that will assure that the focus on educational effectiveness will be sustained.

As progress continues, several additional steps are in order. The Commission expects that analysis of findings from assessment will be undertaken by the faculty in a systematic way, and that the results of this process will lead to improvements. As set forth in the Standards, the “faculty takes responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process and uses the results for improvement.” (CFR 4.6) The Commission was pleased to learn of UCR’s actions following the visit to establish a joint administrative-Academic Senate committee, to advise departments on the implementation of their assessment plans and to monitor follow-through. Work on the online repository of outcomes, plans, and assessment findings promises to promote the sustainability of assessment efforts. The good work in establishing student learning outcomes and adopting assessment methods for all the undergraduate programs can also serve as a model to extend assessment to general education and graduate programs. The Commission noted in your response that preliminary plans to assess general education will begin with the outcomes related to written communication and breadth of knowledge, and that graduate programs are being encouraged to develop outcomes and initiate assessment now, so that evidence of student learning will be available by the time of their next scheduled program

review. As UCR moves forward with its educational effectiveness work, the sound and thoughtful recommendations in the team report about how to proceed will provide valuable guidance. (CFRs 1.2, 2.3, 2.6, 4.6, 4.7)

Strategic Planning, Priorities, and Growth. As stated in the Commission’s June 2008 letter, “strategic planning is a top priority for UCR and [the Commission] expects that the new leadership will take steps to address planning as soon as possible, especially in view of UCR’s plans for continued growth in graduate programs and the establishment of a new medical school.” The EER team noted in its report that “strategic planning has begun in earnest” and that a final plan is expected by June 2010.

The Commission supports the actions being taken and commends to you several areas for close attention in the strategic plan. The representative and collaborative planning process that is underway is commendable and is expected to consider carefully the ambitious plans for program growth at the graduate level and for achieving AAU recognition, especially in view of the current state budget challenges. The Commission would expect the planning process to be utilized to explore these initiatives carefully and to set priorities that will continue strong support for UCR’s mission, including its emphasis on undergraduate education and serving the diverse population in the region and state. Related is the need for planning to cover goals and metrics relating to student achievement. As expressed in the WASC Standards, “planning processes are informed by appropriately defined and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data, and include consideration of evidence of educational effectiveness, including student learning.” The Commission acknowledges the University’s commitment, stated in your response to the team report, to develop metrics for student learning outcomes as part of strategic planning. Finally, as noted above, UCR has done excellent work in recruiting and retaining underrepresented groups to the student body and to supporting those students to graduation. Related is the progress that had been made in building a more diverse faculty. The Commission supports the team’s recommendation and urges the campus to continue to prioritize programs that will help UCR to fulfill its goals for diversity. (CFRs 1.2, 1.5, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness Review report and reaffirm the accreditation of the University of California, Riverside.
2. Schedule the Capacity and Preparatory Review for fall 2018 and the Educational Effectiveness Review for spring 2020. The Institutional Proposal for this comprehensive review will be due in fall 2016.
3. Request an Interim Report in fall 2012 on the issues cited in the EER report. These include: a) progress in student learning outcomes assessment, including i) demonstrating the extent to which students meet expected levels of achievement, utilizing the results of assessment for improvement, and developing assessment plans for the general education component of the undergraduate degree and ii) developing student learning outcomes and assessment plans for graduate programs; and b) completion and implementation of a strategic plan that addresses the issues cited in this letter, including planning for growth

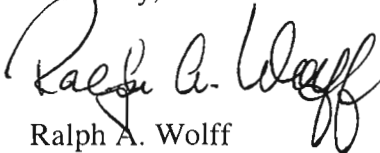
in graduate programs, realistic financial projections, and inclusion of plans and measures relating to student learning outcomes.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that the University of California, Riverside 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, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of University of California Board of Regents in one week. A copy of this letter will also be sent to the University of California President Mark Yudof. 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 and Executive Director

RW/tc

Cc: Sherwood Lingenfelter, Commission Chair
David Fairris, ALO
Russell Gould, Board Chair
Mark Yudof, President of the University of California
Members of the CPR team