



March 11, 2013

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Michael V. Drake
Chancellor
University of California, Irvine
510 Aldrich Hall
Irvine, CA 92697-1000

Dear Chancellor Drake:

At its meeting February 20-22, 2013, the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) team that conducted the visit to University of California, Irvine (UCI) October 10-12, 2012. The Commission also had access to the Educational Effectiveness Review report prepared by UCI prior to the visit, the institution's December 21, 2012, response to the visiting team report and the documents relating to the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) visit conducted in spring 2011. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you; your comments were very helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations.

UCI's institutional proposal outlined three themes for this comprehensive review: student learning in the major; educational effectiveness in general education (GE); and academic program review. Collectively these themes addressed UCI's overarching goals for reaccreditation: 1) greater clarity about the institution's educational objectives and criteria for defining and evaluating those objectives; 2) improvement of the institution's capacity for self-review and of its systems of quality assurance; 3) a deeper understanding of student learning, the development of more varied and effective methods of assessing learning, and the use of the results for improvement; and 4) systematic engagement of the faculty with issues of assessing and improving teaching and learning. The team found the EER institutional report to be "well organized, clearly written, and presented with appropriate use of evidence in support of analysis." The team concluded that the reaccreditation review process "clearly led UCI to a greater understanding of its educational effectiveness, including both student learning and systems for continuous quality improvement."

The Commission's letter of July 18, 2011, urged UCI to continue its progress in: implementing a campus-wide assessment system to improve student learning in the major; revising GE and establishing agreed upon course level outcomes; and strengthening the program review process to support improved educational outcomes. The Commission also asked UCI to expand its analysis of student success. The EER team determined that, in the interval between the CPR and EER, UCI had made "significant progress on all of these expectations" and had "achieved its goals to a substantial degree."

According to the team, UCI demonstrated, in its report and throughout the visit, evidence of:

- Extensive deployment of student learning outcomes;
- Broad-based commitment to a system of faculty-owned, outcomes-based assessment that informs decision-making;
- Institution-wide, systematic assessment of learning outcomes with documentation of learning results in most academic and student services units;
- An effective program review process;
- Strong retention and graduation rates that correctly signal a campus-wide commitment to student learning and success; and
- Use of student achievement data by faculty to make improvements in learning.

UCI is to be especially commended for:

Establishing a culture of assessment. At the undergraduate level, 94% of the programs have assessment plans and 82% have completed assessment reports, a “laudable” achievement, as the team noted, for such a large and diverse institution. At the graduate level, an “impressive” *Framework for Graduate Programs* is being piloted. This *Framework* articulates discipline-specific program learning outcomes and assessment strategies in the areas of content knowledge, research methods and analysis, pedagogy, scholarly communication, professionalism, research ethics, and independent research. UCI has also put in place a variety of initiatives to promote and assess student success that have created, according to the team, “an enduring culture of productive assessment.”

Institutionalizing quality assurance processes. For example, proposals for new courses must include learning outcomes; proposals for new degree programs must include an assessment plan in support of program learning outcomes; and a review of student learning outcomes has been explicitly integrated into the program review process. UCI’s quality assurance systems have been “enhanced by the integration of methods for assessing student learning.”

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

General education. While UCI has made “commendable progress” toward the implementation of its new GE curriculum, more work is needed. The Commission expects UCI to continue its efforts to integrate relevant GE outcomes into syllabi, review grandfathered courses for alignment with new learning expectations, and fully implement the GE curriculum. The Commission encourages UCI to ensure adequate implementation of GE before assessing the impact of the program on student learning. (CFRs 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.7)

Staffing for assessment and institutional research (IR). Given the considerable extent of the university’s efforts in undergraduate, graduate, and GE assessment, and the institution’s substantial data collection and analysis activities, it will be important that UCI continue

existing staff support while monitoring ongoing staffing needs. Adequate staffing will be particularly crucial if future financial circumstances necessitate further cuts to educational programs (which thus far have been restricted in size and impact), as assessment and IR data will help the institution better understand and manage the impacts of such decisions on academic excellence. (CFR 3.1, 3.8, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness Review report.
2. Reaffirm the accreditation of the University of California, Irvine.
3. Schedule the next comprehensive review with the offsite review in fall 2021 and the accreditation visit tentatively scheduled for fall 2022.
4. Request a progress report due April 3, 2017, on the following issues cited in the EER team report:
 - a. Update on general education: integration of relevant GE outcomes into course syllabi; alignment of grandfathered courses with learning expectations; implementation of the GE curriculum; assessment of general education.
 - b. Update on assessment: status of program-level assessment plans and reports for undergraduate degrees; status of program learning outcomes, assessment plans, and assessment reports for graduate degrees.

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

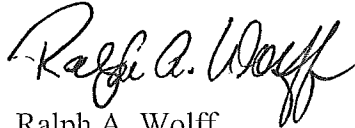
As UC Irvine addresses the issues cited above, it should be mindful of the expectations that it will need to meet at the time of its next comprehensive review, which will take place under the revised Standards of Accreditation and institutional review process in the *2013 Handbook of Accreditation*. 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 institutional planning for the “new ecology” of learning. The university is urged to familiarize itself with the *2013 Handbook* and to approach its challenges in ways that will address both old and new expectations.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of the University of California, Irvine’s governing board in one week. A copy of this letter will also be sent to President Mark Yudof. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on UCI’s website and widely disseminated throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement. The team report and Commission action letter will also be posted on the WASC website. If the institution wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WASC will post a link to that response.

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 contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ralph A. Wolff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "W".

Ralph A. Wolff
President

RW/bgd

cc: Harold Hewitt, Commission Chair
Michael Clark and Sharon Salinger, ALOs
Sherry Lansing, Board Chair
Mark Yudof, President
Members of the EER team
Barbara Gross Davis, Vice President