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December 7, 2012

Karen S. Haynes
President
California State University, San Marcos
333 Twin Oaks Valley Road
San Marcos, CA 92096-0001

Dear President Haynes:

At its meeting on November 29, 2012, a panel of the Interim Report Committee convened to consider the Interim Report submitted by California State University, San Marcos on November 1, 2012. The panel reviewed your Interim Report and the Commission's action letter of June 26, 2009.

The panel appreciated the opportunity to discuss the report via teleconference with Provost and Vice President Emily Cutrer, Associate Vice President and ALO Graham Oberem, Associate Professor Jennifer Jeffries, Associate Vice President Matthew Ceppi, Associate Vice President David Barsky, Professor Sharon Hamill, Associate Vice President Lorena Meza, and Associate Vice President Mary Hinchman. The conversation was informative and helped the panelists better understand your institution's challenges and accomplishments in addressing the areas cited in the Commission's letter.

The report was exceptionally thorough in addressing the Commission's recommendations. In particular, the overall organization of the report, and the ease of obtaining and verifying supporting evidence, highlighted both the detailed and the broad scope of thinking that went into preparing the report. It was evident to the panelists that the institution made a strong commitment to respond to the Commission, and was successful in carrying out that commitment.

In terms of the Commission's specific recommendations:

Assessment of Learning: The institution needs to continue to enhance its skills and structures related to assessment of learning, and complete its formal policies and templates related to program review, including obtaining Faculty Senate endorsement of the program review plans. The panel noted key accomplishments, including: the establishment of the Director of Academic Assessment position staffed by a full-time faculty member released from teaching; the availability of continuing assessment workshops to help faculty develop and revise Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs); the approval by the Academic Senate of Program Review and Policy Guidelines; the creation of a one-stop shop program review website for use by reviewers; and the completion of annual assessment plan protocols. In addition, the institution has carefully delineated the next actions to be taken, evidencing its commitment not only to satisfying the initial steps of the Commission's recommendations, but also to continuing that progress going forward.

Academic Planning: By building on the foundational work already begun in academic planning, the institution should expand the visible linkages between academic planning and resource allocations. It appears to the panel that those linkages are firmly situated, that there is a recognized need to enhance data collection and the appropriate initiatives have been launched to assure this, and that forecasting has embraced an especially broad evidence base, including regional economic and workforce data. The panel commends the institution for the wide variety of efforts that have been taken across the organization.

Retention and Graduation: Continuing the excellent work the institution has already done with respect to the first-year experience and retention, CSUSM should expand the focus of these efforts to include retention beyond the first year, and toward improvements in the six-year graduate rates. Again the panel noted key accomplishments, which include: the highly proactive and well organized efforts to improve retention and graduate rates (and the sensitive and responsive actions relative to the needs of low performing and special needs students); the hiring of a Student Academic Success Coordinator; the evidence that retention and graduate goals are a community-wide endeavor (e.g., presenting results of initiatives at Town Hall meetings); and the efforts to assure co-curricular and curricular life have multiple points of intersection, thus becoming mutually supporting.

In conclusion, the panel extends its broad commendation for the exceptionally wide and well considered range of activities that have been directed to the three Commission recommendations. The panel offers two observations for the institution's consideration. First, with such multiple and intersecting efforts, how will the institution decide which of its activities have borne the best results? If faced with having to trim back on some of these initiatives, how will decision makers conclude which of them have been most effective? Second, the panel members encourage the institution to document how the exemplary evidence being collected by the various initiatives will be used to 'close the loop': how will feedback, in particular to faculty, be used in a continuing effort to improve their teaching and their students' learning?

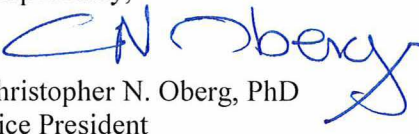
After consultation with institutional representatives and further discussion, the panel acted to:

1. Receive the Interim Report with recommendations and commendations as noted above.

This action concludes the institution's engagement in the Interim Report process relative to the letter of the Commission, dated June 26, 2009.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or if I can be helpful.

Respectfully,


Christopher N. Oberg, PhD
Vice President

cc: Graham Oberem, Associate Vice President for Planning & Academic Resources, and ALO
Jennifer Jeffries, Associate Professor in School of Education, and former ALO
Members of the Interim Report Committee