



June 27, 2003

Peter P. Smith
President
California State University, Monterey Bay
100 Campus Center
Seaside, CA 93955-8001

Dear President Smith:

At its meeting on June 20-21, 2003, the Commission considered the report of the Preparatory and Educational Effectiveness Review teams, which visited the University on October 16-18, 2002 and March 5-7, 2003. The Commission had access to the Institutional Presentation for both visits, including the accompanying Portfolio. The Commission appreciated having the opportunity to discuss the visit with you; Diane Cordero de Noriega, Provost and Academic Vice President; Amy Driscoll, Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning; Don Johnson, Vice President for Administration and Finances; and Linda Stamps, Vice-Provost for Institutional Effectiveness. Your comments helped the Commission Panel better understand the University.

Both the Preparatory Review and the Educational Effectiveness Review were framed by the University's Proposal, which defined a set of important issues for the University to address. The Institutional Presentation for both reviews included a written and a web-based component that was well-organized, clearly presented, and reflective of substantial engagement of the University community, with a self-review under Commission Standards and analyses of issues important to the University. Particularly useful was the evidence map developed by the institution to guide the team in its review of the institutional materials and web portfolio. It is hoped that the Portfolio developed by the University, and the evidence underlying it, will be useful to the University beyond the accreditation review process and that it will serve as a foundation for the next accreditation review.

The University has developed significantly since its original Candidacy visit--and even since the Candidacy extension review in fall 2000. As an institution attempting to "build the bicycle while riding it," the University now stands, as described by the team, on the verge of being a national model. The University has articulated University learning outcomes and extended them throughout the curriculum, has embedded a commitment to community service through the Proseminar and numerous service opportunities, and has reflected its

985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100
Alameda, CA 94501
PHONE: 510.748.9001
FAX: 510.748.9797
E-MAIL: wascsr@wascsenior.org
INTERNET: www.wascweb.org

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commitment to diversity in its courses and learning requirements. It has developed intentional links between student-learning outcomes and the results of program reviews by using the resources of the Center for Teaching and Learning to foster an inquiry-based approach to the University's assessment program. It is developing a new financial model to help evaluate the costs of the CSUMB educational model and is moving from a general approach to recruitment to an approach focused on students in specific categories. In addition, the University has developed a five-year plan organized around the University's themes and has shifted governance from a consensus model to a representative model with the establishment of the institution's first Academic Assembly and Senate Constitution and Bylaws.

These are significant steps in their own right for a new institution. As reported by the team, the University has been able to bring these important initiatives together in a way that has forged an effective and exciting learning community that engages students as full members of its community that uses inquiry and scholarship as foundational approaches to its own learning and development. The Commission commends the University for its progress, for its achievements to date, and for providing models that others in the region may look to in their mutual quest to assess student learning. The University was established with tremendous hope and bold objectives. The team has found that the University is well on its way to fulfilling these goals and to provide significant evidence of their achievement.

The evaluation teams made a number of commendations and recommendations to the University during this initial accreditation process. The Commission endorsed them and wishes to highlight several issues for further attention:

Sustaining the University's Vision as a Vital and Dynamic Force. Since its founding, the University has defined and articulated a vision statement that has been carefully crafted to become the core of the institution's functioning and the organizing basis for participation in the University community. In creating the vision statement, the University has attempted to bring together the goals and values it believes are needed for an authentic 21st century education, while challenging faculty, staff, administrators and students to use the vision as a guiding framework. The team wrote:

The vision and the mission were involved in a variety of settings and by a broad range of people to explain their motivations, their aspirations their goals and the distinctive character of the campus. The vision is clearly very real and in the past several years, it has been made operational in very concrete terms, in their standards, the principles on which decisions are based, and in the everyday conversations on campus.

As the University grows and matures, it will need to find ways to keep the vision alive as an active, dynamic, and Unifying force, without letting it become an orthodoxy or a rote statement. The University has been able to do this to date through its systemic use of inquiry about issues central to the University, its commitment to a culture of evidence informing dialogue and actions, and its active and periodic reviews of the vision statement and its underlying values. The spirit of openness with which these efforts have been undertaken has been important as well. As new and larger

numbers of students, faculty, and staff come to the University, recreating the strong sense of community and shared commitment to values and learning-centeredness will be important if the University is to maintain the vital and dynamic qualities it currently enjoys.

Focusing on "the Missing Middle." The University has focused considerable energy on incorporating its core values throughout the University and on aligning activities with University goals and University Learning Requirements (ULRs). The University's planning efforts and Course Alignment Program have been especially successful in this regard. As the University continues its efforts in this direction, it needs to focus its attention on the areas defined by the team as "the Missing Middle." The University has paid careful attention to assessing learning outcomes in general education and in its senior capstone projects. However, the links between these two experiences in the journey of a student are less well understood.

How do individual courses, major requirements, service learning, and other expectations for students contribute to the CSUMB learning objectives for graduates? It is important to the University's overall development and success that the links be made among the essential elements of the CSUMB experience, and that more alignment and integration of these functions occur.

Deepening the Commitment to Learning-centeredness. The team indicated that CSUMB is ready to become a national leader in outcomes-based education. Clearly, this is related to the way in which learning centeredness has been approached as a core strategic value of the University in how the University has aligned its many functions in relation to that value. Particularly noteworthy has been the approach to evaluating student learning as a scholarly inquiry, involving faculty centrally in this process and the use of the results of studies as the basis for publications. A strong foundation has been laid through innovative programs and activities for assessing student work in several departments. Many of these efforts are exemplary.

These efforts will now need to be institutionalized as ongoing and systematic activities of the faculty and extended more fully and systematically across the University and all of its units. They must focus even more directly on student-learning results and the standards used for evaluating student performance in relation to the University's learning requirements. There is much to be learned from different disciplinary approaches to learning and assessment that are already being used in discussions within the University and that need to be continued and expanded. As the faculty and student body grow, sustaining the learning-centered culture will be critical if the University is to maintain its effectiveness and distinctiveness.

In addition, it will be important for the University to continue to validate the value and impact of its distinct educational experience. This will require studying the University's graduates to develop an understanding of the impact of the CSUMB experience on its students that carries forward after graduation. This will help in the determination of which elements of the CSUMB program have had the most significant effect on student values and performance. Such evidence will also be important in understanding the relationship between the cost, outcomes, and value of the University and its distinctive approaches to education.

Sustaining Innovative Practices. At the heart of the CSUMB experience are three "defining features of the CSUMB education": Proseminar, service learning, and the capstone course. Each conveys and validates the core values of the vision statement in different and important ways. Proseminar gives its participants a sense of the University's core values, Service learning and civic learning provides the opportunity to explore learning environments and to test out and discover actual competencies. The capstone course provides the opportunity for students and faculty to validate student competencies. Given the importance of these innovative practices, it will be important to ensure that they are included as core elements of the University's budget and without being dependent on special funding.

In regard to innovation, the team commended the University for a number of promising practices. Yet the University needs to understand the costs of innovation since it is faced with the challenges of scaling up. Inquiry into the costs of innovation will benefit the University and be helpful to the higher education community as a whole.

The Commission acted to:

1. Grant Initial Accreditation to California State University, Monterey Bay.
2. Schedule the Preparatory Review in fall 2009 and the Educational Effectiveness Review in fall 2010. The Proposal for the two-stage review is due on May 1, 2007.

On behalf of the Commission, I wish to extend my congratulations to the University community for achieving this important milestone and for the level of accomplishment to date.

Initial Accreditation is granted for a maximum of seven years. Accreditation status is not granted retroactively. Institutions granted the status of Accreditation must use the following statement if they wish to describe the status publicly:

California State University, Monterey Bay is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 985 Atlantic Avenue, #100, Alameda, CA 94501, 510-748-9001.

The phrase "fully accredited" is to be avoided, since no partial accreditation is possible. The accredited status of a program should not be misrepresented. The accreditation granted by WASC refers to the quality of the institution as a whole. Since institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program in the institution, statements like "this program is accredited" or "this degree is accredited" are incorrect and misleading.

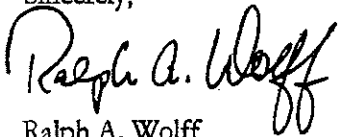
In taking this action to grant accreditation, the Commission confirms that the institution has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness and has successfully completed the multistage review conducted under the Standards

of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review, the institution is expected to continue its progress and be prepared to respond as expectations of institutional performance, especially with respect to Educational Effectiveness and student learning, further develop under the application of the Standards of Accreditation.

In accordance with Commission policy, we request that you send a copy of this letter to Chancellor Charles Reed.

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

Sincerely,



Ralph A. Wolff
Executive Director

cc: James Appleton
Linda Stamps
Members of the team
Gregory M. Scott

RW/brn