



July 3, 2001

Henry T. Yang
Chancellor
University of California, Santa Barbara
Santa Barbara, CA 93106

Dear Chancellor Yang:

At its meeting on June 20-22, 2001, the Commission considered the report of the evaluation team that visited the University of California, Santa Barbara on February 6-9, 2001. The Commission also had available to it the self study submitted by the University in preparation for the visit and the University's response to the team report, dated May 10, 2001. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to meet with Executive Vice Chancellor Ilene Nagel, Associate Vice Chancellor Ronald Tobin, Undergraduate Studies Dean Alan Wyner, and Graduate Dean Charles Li. Their comments were very helpful.

The Commission notes that the University undertook a self study focused on three issues: the freshman experience, graduate education, and educational effectiveness. In each of the three areas, the University engaged the campus community around important questions of educational goals and alternative ways of achieving those goals. UCSB is to be commended for its work on topics that are foundational to the student learning experience. The University has already developed a number of programs out of its recognition that change is needed in American higher education, especially in graduate education. These innovations, such as the professional seminars in graduate departments, have the potential of becoming national models. They reflect a vibrancy in the University. The Commission looks forward to the integration of the self-study topics with the on-going planning and budgetary processes at UCSB, expecting that the entire process will contribute to the University well beyond the conclusion of the accreditation review process.

At the time of the last WASC visit ten years ago, the University stated its aspiration of becoming one of the top 20 research universities in the United States. The Commission concurs with the team that UCSB's progress in this regard has been remarkable. Admission to AAU in 1995, significantly increased research funding, and the two new Nobel Laureates are all indications of the increased stature of UCSB as a major research university. The topics chosen for this review establish the ways in which the University's research mission impacts the educational experience

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of its students. The topics highlight the synergy between the research and academic goals of the University as well as the potential tensions around competing priorities. The Commission supports the University in its commitment to integrate high quality instruction with world-class research.

Within the framework provided by the special topics self study and the institutional portfolio, the evaluation team undertook a review of the University incorporating the spirit of the Commission's Standards. Based on this review, the Commission found the University to be in compliance with its Standards.

The Commission supports the University's work and the team's recommendation on the three topics. In doing so, it highlights some aspects that seem particularly important in light of on-going institutional improvement goals.

Freshman-Year Experience: The Commission commends the progress UCSB has achieved in defining and strengthening a freshman program designed to facilitate the development of student abilities and attitudes within a research environment. Program initiatives and goals are multifaceted; they importantly reflect the academic potential of UCSB students within a research university setting by building excitement about learning and discovery. A strong plan in this regard has ramifications for the entire undergraduate program, even with the annual challenge of incorporating a significant number of undergraduate transfer students. Such a plan is foundational to the undergraduate educational experience for the individual student and for the institution's over-all academic program.

The work on the Freshman-Year Experience at UCSB has benefitted from the interest, commitment, and collaboration of a number of key campus leaders. However, the Commission shares the team's concern that sustaining the initiatives will be dependent upon organizational structures and committed financial resources; the Commission appreciated the comments by the UCSB representatives indicating that the University has been moving in this direction since the team visit. Additionally, it will be essential to build evaluative mechanisms into the initiatives to enable the University to ensure that they are having the desired impact. Such an analysis is vital to establishing budget priority for the multiple initiatives under consideration to strengthen the first year experience. The Commission encourages the University to address these issues in its commitment to furthering undergraduate excellence.

Graduate Education: The Commission notes that UCSB has been successful in significantly increasing research funding and in improving the quality of its graduate students and graduate programs. The University has been strong in encouraging interdisciplinary work for faculty and for graduate students, a strength that is serving as a platform for the emergence of new and exciting programs.

The graduate programs also serve as a resource for undergraduate education by providing Teaching Assistants. As the University grows it faces the danger of becoming overly reliant on the services of graduate students as Teaching Assistants in certain disciplines, posing potential difficulties for the progress of graduate students in research and toward their degrees. However, for those graduate students who want to stay in the Academy, experience in teaching supported

by orientation and education in preparation for that experience is important. UCSB has a number of innovative and well-designed programs to prepare graduate students; yet significant numbers of graduate students are not reached by these programs. The Commission encourages UCSB to develop strategies to prepare graduate students for careers in teaching and beyond.

Educational Effectiveness: The Commission notes both the team's suggestions in this area and the University's endorsement in its letter of May 10, 2001. The campus clearly has an effective and well institutionalized program review process, sophisticated institutional research, and a plethora of data. As well, the Commission agrees that the data, including those in the self study, would have benefitted from more analysis and from integration into a framework for reflecting upon the University's performance and plans. The Commission encourages UCSB to move forward in this regard.

The Commission acted to:

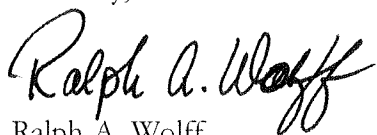
1. Reaffirm the Accreditation of the University of California, Santa Barbara.
2. Schedule the Proposal for the two-stage review to be due October 15, 2008. Schedule the Preparatory Review in spring 2011 and the Educational Effectiveness Review in spring 2012.

The next scheduled review of the institution will occur under the *Handbook of Accreditation 2001*, which involves significant new Standards and substantially different expectations for Institutional Presentations under the new review cycle. The Commission urges the University to review the new *Handbook* and to assess how institutional evidence can be developed prior to the next accreditation review that will make the new process less burdensome and more useful.

In accordance with Commission policy, we request that you send a copy of this letter to President Richard C. Atkinson.

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: Marilyn P. Sutton
Ronald Tobin
Members of the Team
Judie G. Wexler

RW/brn