March 8, 2012

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

Dear Chancellor Yang:

At its meeting February 22-24, 2012, the Commission considered the report of the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) team that conducted the visit to University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) October 4-6, 2011. The Commission also had access to the Capacity and Preparatory report submitted by UCSB prior to the visit and your December 9, 2011 response to the visiting team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you, Gene Lucas, executive vice chancellor; and Mary Nisbet, dean, undergraduate education and accreditation liaison officer. Your observations were very helpful.

UCSB’s institutional proposal outlined two themes for the Capacity and Preparatory Review which were later modified with the approval of WASC staff: undergraduate educational effectiveness in the research university and excellence in graduate education. In addition, two special topic essays were presented on student success and academic program review.

The Commission commended UCSB for the strong management of its finances despite decreases in state funding in eight of the last ten years. Through the adoption of well-articulated budget principles, the University has been able to maintain a strong priority on instruction and research while making only limited reductions to the faculty. As suggested by the visiting team, UCSB will need to continue to monitor and plan any further reductions carefully to ensure that vital academic functions are not impaired. The Commission also commended UCSB for establishing a strong working relationship with the community; for taking deliberate efforts to meet the needs of its many low-income, first-generation undergraduates, whose four-year graduation rates have increased from 45% to 67% in the last ten years; and for developing a strong academic program review process.

The Commission likewise endorsed the recommendations of the CPR team and wished to emphasize the following areas for continued attention and development:

**Building the capacity for assessing student learning and demonstrating educational effectiveness.** The Commission expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of commitment to, and engagement, with WASC’s expectations for educational effectiveness at UCSB. As reported by the team, the university had made little progress in establishing outcomes and assessing student learning at the
time of the CPR visit, even though WASC expectations about educational effectiveness have been in place for more than a decade and UCSB’s revised proposal for this review was directed toward this endeavor. Initiatives had only been started a few months prior to the visit and only four departments (representing 25% of the undergraduate enrollment) were engaging in pilot studies to identify student learning outcomes, to assess achievement of those outcomes, and to use the results for program improvement. The Commission acknowledges the team’s finding that UCSB’s “ground up approach has been a thoughtful and successful strategy … establishing a strong foundation for scaling and sustaining” assessment and the revised program review process. It endorses the full involvement of the faculty and Academic Senate in approval and implementation of these pilot studies and was encouraged by your response to the team report, which outlined very aggressive steps for moving forward. By the time of the Educational Effectiveness Review, the Commission expects, at a minimum, that the four pilot studies will be completed and that all remaining undergraduate programs will have approved learning outcomes and assessment plans in place. While the University has focused primarily on assessment of student learning in undergraduate programs, assessment work also needs to be extended to graduate-level programs and to co-curricular activities. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.11, 4.6-4.8)

The Commission also expects UCSB to develop institution-wide learning goals and to continue campus-wide discussions about general education as it works toward establishing these institutional-level outcomes. (CFR 2.2a)

Preparing graduate students. Many doctoral programs are predicated on the assumption that graduates will find tenure-track faculty positions and they prepare students based on this assumption. UCSB is to be commended for recognizing that many graduate students will enter non-academic fields. Accordingly, UCSB is beginning to take steps to prepare graduate students for a variety of career options. The Commission encourages these initiatives and looks forward to seeing further enhancements to the University’s graduate education programs that will better inform students of their options and provide them with the skills needed to succeed after graduation. (CFRs 2.2b, 2.10)

The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Capacity and Preparatory Review report and continue the accreditation of the University of California, Santa Barbara.

2. Reschedule the Educational Effectiveness Review visit from spring 2013 to fall 2013. The Institutional Report will be due 12 weeks prior to the scheduled visit.

3. Request that the institution incorporate its response to the issues raised in this action letter, and to the major recommendations of the CPR team report, into its Educational Effectiveness Review report. You may include this analysis in an appendix or incorporate it into the report.

In extending the timeframe until the Educational Effectiveness Review, the Commission hopes to provide the institution with time to build upon its progress to date, so that by the time of the
Educational Effectiveness Review, UCSB will be able to demonstrate that the four pilot studies have been completed, as outlined in the team report and this letter, and that all departments on campus have approved learning outcomes and assessment plans, and are actively working toward the collection and analysis of assessment data.

In accordance with Commission policy, copies of this letter will be sent to President Mark Yudof and the chair of the UC Board of Regents in one week. 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

RW/ro

c: Linda Johnsrud, Commission Chair
Mary Nisbet, ALO
Mark Yudof, President, University of California
Members of the CPR team
Richard Osborn