



December 18, 2007

Warren J. Baker
President
California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407-0006

Dear President Baker:

At its December 12, 2007 meeting, a panel of the Proposal Review Committee considered the California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo Proposal for its next reaffirmation of accreditation review. Members of the Panel asked me to express their appreciation for the participation in the telephone conference call of your colleagues: W. David Conn, Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Undergraduate Education and ALO; Bill Durgin, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Susan Elrod, Associate Professor, Biological Sciences and Faculty Chair, WASC Review Committee; Bruno Giberti, Professor, Architecture and Chair, Academic Senate; Dan Howard-Greene, President's Chief of Staff; Brent Goodman, Director, Institutional Planning and Analysis; and Rachel Henry, Administrative Assistant, Academic Programs. It was evident to the panel that the proposal was the result of consultation with a broad range of stakeholders and much reflective thought. The institutional representatives' responses to the panel's questions were also very helpful in assisting the panel to better understand the institution's intentions for the upcoming comprehensive review.

As I communicated to Dr. Conn by telephone on December 12th, the panel acted to accept the proposal. The panel commends the institution and its team for submitting a strong institutional proposal, finding the narrative to contain a rich description of the University's institutional context and distinctive features, and cogent responses to previous WASC concerns. The panel members were particularly impressed with the inquiry-based approach taken in the proposal and the development of the meaningful, overarching theme articulated by the University. After examining the proposal and conversing with your colleagues, the panel made a number of observations that it would like to share with the institution

The panel suggests that as the University moves forward through the comprehensive review process, sufficient time and reflection be devoted to developing a clear understanding of the parameters and implications of the overarching theme, "Our Polytechnic Identity." Because this understanding is fundamental and underlies the other articulated themes, it is important that

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there be a commonly held, institution-wide vision. The shared vision will then serve as a strong focal point for the inquiry that will follow, allowing the campus to engage the themes that flow from it in a meaningful way.

Related to this is the issue of what diversity might mean in the context of the 21st century polytechnic university. Diversity is an area of inquiry that runs throughout the proposal, but it is not clear just how diversity will be conceptualized at Cal Poly within the context of defining "Our Polytechnic Identity." The panel urges the University, as it thinks about goals and identifies challenges with respect to diversity, to consider the broader context of learning rather than simple numerically-measured successes.

A third area for attention concerns the need to ensure that the pieces of the comprehensive review form a coherent whole. The panel urges Cal Poly to use the results of the Capacity and Preparatory Review to inform the work of the Educational Effectiveness Review, and in turn, to explicitly apply the results of the latter to improve teaching and learning. With respect to educational effectiveness, the institution is urged to think clearly about what kinds of evidence of achievement of student learning goals will show that outcomes have been achieved. To do this, the University's student learning objectives must be measurable with clearly defined indicators of success and explicit linkages made between course level, program level and university-wide expectations.

Finally, the panel suggests explicit embedding of the WASC Standards, including CFR citations into the upcoming Capacity and Preparatory and Educational Effectiveness reports. Doing so will provide a guide for the visiting teams and the Commission as these bodies do their work.

The proposal now becomes the framework for the accreditation review process and represents a plan of action and commitment by the institution. The proposal will be shared with the visiting teams for both the Capacity and Preparatory Review and the Educational Effectiveness Review, and with the Commission following each review. It is understood that adjustments in the activities undertaken under the proposal will be made as implementation occurs. Major changes to the proposal, such as in the direction or focus of institutional activities for the accreditation review process, are to be approved in advance by Commission staff. The timeline for the review will remain with the Capacity and Preparatory Review in spring 2010 and the Educational Effectiveness Review in fall 2011. As you prepare for your Capacity and Preparatory Review, please plan to attend the upcoming CPR workshop held during the WASC Academic Resource Conference (ARC) in April.

We wish you well and look forward to working with you on this review cycle.

Sincerely,



Michelle Behr
Assistant Director

Cc: David Conn, Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Undergraduate Education; ALO
Proposal Review Committee

Cheryl Neff, Susan Orod, Mary Whiteford, Rachel Henry, Brona Skiverti