



February 25, 2005

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Richard R. Rush  
President  
California State University, Channel Islands  
One University Drive  
Camarillo, CA 93012

Dear President Rush:

At its meeting on February 17-18, 2005, the Commission considered the reports that were prepared by the Capacity and Preparatory Review and the Educational Effectiveness Review teams that conducted the Candidacy visits to California State University, Channel Islands (CSUCI) on February 5-7, 2003, and October 13-15, 2004. The Commission noted that the Educational Effectiveness Review was rescheduled from October 2003 to October 2004 at your request, to allow CSUCI additional time to respond to the recommendations of the Capacity and Preparatory Review team. The Commission also had access to the Institutional Presentations for the two visits and your response to the review, dated January 11, 2005. The Commission found the opportunity to discuss the review with you; Theodore Lucas, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs; and Dennis Muraoka, Special Assistant to the President for Institutional Effectiveness, helpful in understanding better the University and the issues raised by the visiting team.

The accreditation review cycle for CSUCI began with the Proposal for the Candidacy Review, dated February 18, 2002. The institution, in its report for the Capacity and Preparatory Review, used a combination of the strategic planning and special theme models, in close alignment with the objectives for the review stated in the Proposal. The on-site review resulted in a team report with 11 major recommendations spanning all four Standards. Channel Islands requested an extension of time between reviews to respond to the team recommendations and used this extension to good effect by writing an evidentiary-based Educational Effectiveness Report, which again employed a combination of the strategic planning and special themes models. The institutional report focused on:

- (1) the adequacy of institutional educational objectives and program learning outcomes, (2) the capacity of the curriculum and pedagogy to enable students to attain learning outcomes, and (3) the effectiveness of the methods of assessing and evaluating what

students know and are able to do, in order to evaluate the alignment among institutional educational objectives, curriculum, and learning outcomes.

The Commission would like to commend the thoughtfulness and spirit of engagement with which CSU Channel Islands has undertaken the accreditation review process, involving, at your report, some 50 task forces, including most of the founding faculty and staff, who worked to gather and analyze evidence and reflect on the issues written about in the self-study. The Commission acknowledges their collective good work and the distance the University has come in just a few short years since it opened its doors. Much of its progress can undoubtedly be attributed to members of this pioneering group who have worked overtime to ensure the University's establishment and strong beginnings, and who are together forging your shared future. The team report put it well:

Over a four-year period CSUCI has conceived and launched a new university with a unique philosophy and character through the extraordinary efforts of a small community of dedicated and visionary faculty administrators, and staff. Together they have built a university from the ground up: they have given the University shape and definition, opened its doors, taught courses, and conferred degrees. The WASC team was continually impressed with the accomplishments of this fledgling campus and how much has been done in a few short years.

Chief among the University's accomplishments is the formulation of a unique mission statement, shaped during the year between the two site visits. This distinct mission places students clearly at the center of the educational experience. It conveys the University's integrative approach to learning across disciplines and to the experiential, service-learning foci of its pedagogy. The inclusion of multicultural and international perspectives in the statement places emphasis on institutional values that respect and foster diversity and global citizenship. It is clear from the University and team reports that CSUCI has made a concentrated effort to understand, anticipate, and serve the needs of the region's diverse, working student population. The team found strong support for the new mission statement everywhere on campus and deemed the mission a "good fit" for its students and for the wider Channel Islands community.

Further, with regard to its extended community, CSUCI has planned carefully for its service to the region, and the Commission commends the outreach efforts and the spirit of inclusiveness that have characterized early community relationships. The team report notes many early initiatives, including work with community colleges on articulated curricula and on transfer opportunities; the provision of land for a local charter school on campus; programs to serve local schools and other parts of the community; the establishment of a Summer College for High School Students; and encouragement of faculty, students, and staff to participate in community programs and committees. The Office of Extended Education has been active in gauging the needs of the region in several additional ways.

The University has thought unusually carefully about how, at the outset, it will structure, facilitate, and encourage alignment with the new mission statement and with the values it expresses. In response to suggestions made by the Capacity and Preparatory Review team, CSUCI developed two University-wide learning outcomes intended to provide a focal point for educational programs and their assessment activities. The outcomes were newly crafted before the team visit. CSUCI still has work to do to ensure that the outcomes are understood, endorsed, and enacted across the campus. The Commission commends the University for its work to define learning outcomes at the institutional level and at program and course levels in alignment with its new mission statement. The team noted as a particular strength the similar alignment of learning outcomes or program objectives in the co-curricular area, together with a system of co-curricular program reviews. The extent of integration of student affairs with academic affairs is a distinct strength for CSUCI, and the Commission urges that this integration be maintained as the University grows. Overall, the amount and quality of the reflection and engagement given to this early work on learning outcomes will be the foundation of the University's future growth.

The Educational Effectiveness Review team identified 10 summary recommendations, and the Commission urges that each of these recommendations, as well as the recommendations of the Capacity and Preparatory Review team, be given serious consideration. The Commission wishes to highlight the following areas as the University prepares for its review for Initial Accreditation:

**Fulfilling the Promise of the Mission.** The Commission has commended the institution for its well-articulated mission statement, and acknowledges the potential that an interdisciplinary organizing approach may offer to higher education. At the same time, there are significant challenges posed in fully implementing the new mission statement and much needs to be done to embed the mission statement in the day-to-day structures and culture. The implementation issues will be of even greater importance as the campus grows beyond its founding student body, staff, and faculty. The team report contains several recommendations that should help the institution move past the initial conceptualization and into critical areas of implementation and evaluation.

By the time of the review for Initial Accreditation, the Commission will expect that the organizing academic structure of the University will be confirmed. Whether CSUCI chooses to organize by interdisciplinary means in centers or in other structures, or whether it organizes by traditional academic disciplines, a deliberate and articulated organizational structure will need to be in place, with attention to how interdisciplinarity will be structured and facilitated.

As CSUCI is well aware, decisions about organizational structure impact central functions, such as program review and faculty recruitment, promotion, and tenure. By the time of the Initial Accreditation Review, the process for program review will need to be implemented in such a way that the Initial Accreditation team can review materials from completed program

reviews, demonstrating that faculty have gathered evidence of student learning and accomplishments, analyzed and reflected on the evidence, and implemented, or at least outlined, improvement actions. In addition, the visiting team will want to see how the issue of interdisciplinary majors will be addressed in the program review process.

The team noted that the Retention, Tenure, and Promotion policy needs to be brought into alignment with the interdisciplinary mission and with the emphasis on students at the center of the educational experience. The policy also needs to address how faculty members will be held accountable for effective teaching based on student learning, and acknowledgment and advancement for those who choose to focus on the scholarship of teaching and learning. By the time of the Initial Accreditation Review, the University needs to make the decision about who makes judgments on interdisciplinary issues and needs to implement its retention, tenure, and promotion policies and procedures.

The interdisciplinary approach being developed by CSUCI has the potential of leading to improved education for students as it is implemented throughout the institution, including a richer perspective in problem solving; an improved ability for faculty, as well as students, to work effectively with others; and an openness to diverse perspectives and ways of knowing. The Commission encourages CSUCI to study best practices of what is being done in interdisciplinary scholarship and learning elsewhere, and to contribute what it is learning about interdisciplinary approaches to the dialogue in the region and nationally.

**Developing and Assessing General Education and Baccalaureate Outcomes.** The two University-wide learning outcomes seem appropriate and clear: those of identifying and understanding international and interdisciplinary issues and perspectives, and developing abilities to analyze, problem-solve and communicate solutions to problems within a disciplinary context. Although, as noted earlier, learning outcomes have been developed for programs and courses, the University has not yet finalized the outcomes for the general education program or for the baccalaureate. Because general education has particular significance within CSU and within the interdisciplinary focus of Channel Islands, these outcomes should be defined and implemented in all general education courses. General education is an area where Channel Islands can establish institutional leadership in assessing learning outcomes, especially with its good start on portfolio learning and capstone experiences. The Commission noted from your report at the meeting that a committee on general education is currently developing learning outcomes and attendant assessment methods.

The team also urged, and the Commission endorses, the development of educational outcomes for the baccalaureate (see, for example the Commission expectations in Criteria For Review (CFR) 2.3, 2.4, and 2.6). By the time of the Initial Accreditation review, the Commission would expect that CSUCI would have these general education and baccalaureate learning outcomes in place and that evidence will have been gathered and

reflected on to assist in understanding what students are learning, and how learning can be improved.

**Developing a Culture of Evidence.** The team found the campus actively engaged in developing assessment activities and in determining how outcomes will be embedded in campus culture. A healthy sense of experimentation and openness pervades the institution's work, and the team noted progress in the development of capstone courses and various approaches to pedagogy. It also noted an emphasis on active faculty engagement and an interest in expanding assessment to employers. Leadership will need to continue efforts to create the vision, agenda, support, and resources for systematic faculty investigation of teaching and learning. The continuing development of effective use of data will systematize a culture of evidence that leads to ongoing faculty reflection about the improvement of student learning and change in pedagogy, curriculum, and educational services.

The establishment of an Assessment Council appears to be particularly appropriate because the Council can play an important role in addressing these issues. During the review for Initial Accreditation, the visiting team will look for evidence of how data from assessment activities inform University planning, budgeting, decision-making, and program and service improvement. The team recommended, and the Commission concurs, that the campus will need to revisit the strategic plan as it implements the restructuring of Academic Affairs and the establishment of new leadership positions in IT, assessment, and faculty development, and as assessment activities begin to yield results for further institutional reflection and action. The Commission noted from your report at the meeting that you intend to consider organizational structure as it evolves, and that a faculty task force is now reviewing alternative organizational structures. It also noted that you have posted an opening for one academic dean and may consider adding a second or third dean in the future.

The Commission noted the request in your letter of January 11, 2005 to accelerate the time period of Candidacy. Commission policy sets Candidacy normally for a period of four years, and allows for acceleration to three years, if warranted. The Commission agrees to accelerate the period of Candidacy in acknowledgement of the progress made to date and in recognition of the extended time period between the Candidacy Capacity and Preparatory Review and the Educational Effectiveness Review. The Commission notes, however, that considerable work lies ahead in responding to team and Commission recommendations. Many structures, positions, and processes are still in the conceptualization phase or have only recently been established, and time is needed for implementation and evaluation. Under the accelerated timeframe, the period in which to accomplish these objectives is quite short. Thus, the entire University community will need to be focused on addressing these issues while accommodating the anticipated growth of the University.

The Commission acted to:

Grant Candidacy to California State University, Channel Islands until February 28, 2008.

2. Schedule the Letter of Intent for Initial Accreditation to be due August 1, 2005. A copy of the Commission publication *How to Become Accredited* is enclosed with this letter, providing further information on the Letter of Intent (page 10) and the process for Initial Accreditation review. Note the expectations set forth by the Commission for Initial Accreditation on pages 12-14.
3. Schedule the Capacity and Preparatory Review for spring 2006 and the Educational Effectiveness Review for spring 2007.

In taking this action to grant Candidacy, the Commission confirms that CSU Channel Islands 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. Institutions granted the status of Candidate for Accreditation must use the following statement whenever they describe that status publicly.

“[Name of institution] has been recognized as a Candidate for Accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), 985 Atlantic Avenue, #100, Alameda, CA 94501, 510.748.9001. This status is a preliminary affiliation with the Commission awarded for a maximum period of four years. Candidacy is an indication that the institution is progressing toward Accreditation. Candidacy is not Accreditation and does not ensure eventual Accreditation.”

Institutions granted Candidacy are required to:

- 1 Submit an Annual Report form in the format required by the Commission.
2. Keep the Commission informed of any significant changes or developments, especially those required to have prior approval by the Commission Substantive Change Policy.

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. We look forward to working with you as you proceed forward to the Initial Accreditation Review. In accordance with Commission policy, we request that you send a copy of this letter to Chancellor Charles Reed.

Commission Action Letter – Page 7  
California State University, Channel Islands  
February 25, 2005

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

Sincerely,



Ralph A. Wolff  
Executive Director

RW/brn

cc: John D. Welty  
Theodore Lucas  
Members of the team  
Elizabeth Griego

Enclosure