



August 7, 2006

Don W. Kassing  
President  
San Jose State University  
One Washington Square  
San Jose, CA 95912

Dear President Kassing:

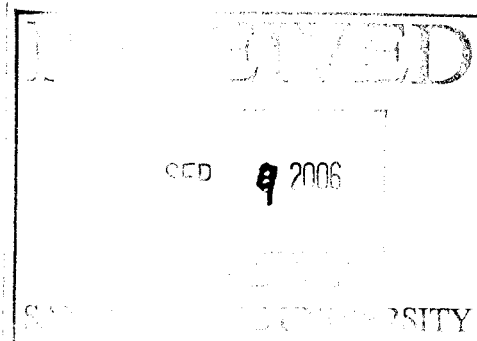
At its meeting on June 22-23, 2006, the Commission considered two matters regarding San Jose State University (SJSU). One was the Special Visit to the University conducted on March 1-3, 2006; the other was SJSU's response to the finding that several SJSU programs had been introduced without obtaining prior approval from the WASC Substantive Change Committee. The Commission appreciated your attendance at the meeting, along with Carmen Sigler, Provost, and Robert Cooper, Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Studies. Your comments and responses were most helpful.

With regard to the Special Visit, the Commission had access to the institution's Special Visit report, the team report of March 2006, and the institutional response to the team report, dated May 18, 2006. With regard to compliance with Substantive Change policy, the Commission reviewed my letter to you dated March 10, 2006, identifying the problem, and your letter to me dated May 12, 2006, outlining the SJSU response.

The Commission was impressed with the progress that SJSU has made in response to the Commission action following the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR). The team that visited this spring found significant progress on the issues that drew the Commission's attention after the Capacity and Preparatory visit in fall 2004. In their report, they express the belief that that a firm foundation for the Educational Effectiveness Review has now been laid. At the same time some problems, particularly in the area of Substantive Change, remain. These two matters are dealt with in greater detail below.

The **Special Visit** team that visited in March found progress on all fronts. Team members were impressed by the leadership provided by you and the team you have assembled. There appears to be a high level of respect across the campus for this leadership, and faculty commented repeatedly to the team on how a new inclusivity has energized the campus and given SJSU a new pride in its mission

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and identity. The team found significant progress on the areas of concern identified after the CPR visit: strategic planning, assessment, and enrollment management.

The educational effectiveness visit was rescheduled to take place in spring 2007. At that time, it will be essential for SJSU to demonstrate that there is continuing to progress on the issues arising from the CPR and special visit. This would include showing that the structures put in place to support the key issues of strategic planning, assessment, and enrollment management are working as intended and, most importantly, are contributing both to improvements in student success and to institutional learning.

With respect to educational effectiveness, the Commission noted that the team reported that some programs and departments remain resistant to assessing student learning outcomes. While the Commission understands that this is a journey that will require responses to different disciplinary or program needs, the ability of the University to demonstrate that learning outcomes are being identified and achieved across the institution is a fundamental accountability requirement of the Commission. The Commission looks forward to progress in bringing all programs and departments into the University's assessment initiative: in ensuring that infrastructure, processes and workloads are sustainable over the long term and in encouraging learning both across time (i.e., cumulative learning) and across traditional boundaries (e.g., programs, departments, academic and student affairs, or general education and the minor). In addition, it will be important to show how strategic planning and alignment of resources have led to increased effectiveness, and how the enrollment management plan has affected retention and success among all sectors of SJSU's diverse student body.

As the University moves forward to the EER, it will need to document, in very concrete terms, how the "learning and belonging" model is being implemented and how the themes emerging out of the Greater Expectations initiative (Integrative Learning, Inclusive Excellence, Community and Connections) are being developed. The Commission will be particularly interested in learning not only what outcomes have been articulated, or data collection methods selected, but also what the *results* of student or institutional learning are. That is, what are your *findings*? What do your findings tell you about the *level* of student achievement, and what *specific improvements* are being introduced to enhance results?

The second issue considered by the Commission is compliance with policy regarding **Substantive Change**. When proposals for degrees in instructional technology and communication disorders were reviewed this spring, it appeared that the two programs had begun operation without prior approval by the Substantive Change Committee. A subsequent WASC review revealed two additional programs that had not gone through the Substantive Change approval process. This is a violation of both WASC and federal policy. As you are aware, this finding led to my suggestion that SJSU review all programs in all schools to determine whether there were other programs that had been implemented without WASC approval. SJSU was warned that non-compliance could be grounds for a sanction.

The Commission is pleased that SJSU immediately undertook a thorough audit of its degree programs. Unfortunately, the audit uncovered a cluster of sites for an MA in Education where it was unclear whether they had gone through the approval process or been duly noted in annual reports.

The unapproved programs and/or sites have now been either approved or are scheduled for Substantive Change review. Nevertheless, this is a troubling finding and reflects a significant breakdown in the internal systems of communication and authority of the University, since these programs operated in violation of the University's fundamental relationship with the Commission under Standard 1, Institutional Integrity. Criterion for Review 1.9 states this very clearly:

The institution is committed to honest and open communication with the Accrediting Commission, to undertaking the accreditation review process with seriousness and candor, and to abiding by Commission policies and procedures, including all substantive change policies.

Further, the then-president of San Jose State University signed a stipulation at the time of submission of the University's Proposal that all substantive change policies had been complied with. That such violations could occur repeatedly and over time caused the Commission serious concern. The situation called into question whether the University had adequate control over all programs and activities offered in its name.

SJSU has expressed its regret for this situation, both in your letter of May 18 and at the Commission meeting SJSU indicated that it has taken steps to put any remaining unapproved programs through the substantive change review process. A new procedure has been designed and implemented to increase oversight and thus preclude future problems, and the University has committed to respecting its accreditation and federal legal requirements in the future. The Commission was pleased to learn of these new procedures and the fact that they have already been tested on faculty grant proposals for new programs.

It will be the University's responsibility, through further audits or other steps the University decides to undertake, to demonstrate that its new procedures are effective, that the Commission's concerns are clearly known and understood, and that the University will abide by the substantive change requirements. The Educational Effectiveness review team will be specifically requested to follow up on this issue at the time of their visit.

The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Special Visit team report.
2. Proceed with the Educational Effectiveness Review scheduled for March 7-9, 2007. The Institutional Presentation will be due on December 13, 2006.

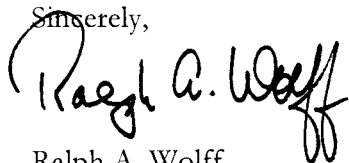
In accordance with a recently adopted Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the Chair of the institution's governing board in one week. It is the Commission's

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expectation on disclosure 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..

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ralph A. Wolff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Ralph A. Wolff  
President and Executive Director

cc: John D. Welty  
Robert Cooper  
Members of the team  
Barbara Wright