



February 2, 2011

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Don Kassing
Interim President
San José State University
One Washington Square
San José, CA 95192-0030

Dear President Kassing:

On January 10, 2011, a panel of the Interim Report Committee convened via conference call to review the Interim Report submitted by San José State University on November 8, 2010. The panel appreciated the opportunity to discuss the report with Provost Gerry Selter; AVP for Undergraduate Studies and ALO Dennis Jaehne; Senior Director of Student Academic Success Services Maureen Scharberg; AVP for Institutional Research Sutee Sujitparapitaya; Professor of Communication Rona Halualani; Associate Dean for General Education Stephen Branz; and Director of Assessment Jacqueline Snell. Their comments were very helpful to the panel's understanding of the University's progress to date and plans for the future.

San José State University was asked to submit an Interim Report following the Educational Effectiveness Review that took place in spring 2007. As noted in the action letter of July 2007, the report was to focus on the following topics: 1) results and sustainability of assessment at all levels; 2) development of the three themes around which the Educational Effectiveness Report was framed ("Integrative Learning," "Community Connection," and "Inclusive Excellence") into core campus values; 3) provisions for leadership transitions; and 4) targets for retention and graduation rates and progress in reaching those targets.

The panel would like to compliment the University on submission of a thorough and informative report. The panel found the progress on program-level assessment—specifically the introduction of changes to the faculty reward system and of mechanisms to increase program compliance with expectations for assessment—particularly commendable. The creation of the Diversity Master Plan is an accomplishment of which the University can be justly proud. Not least of all, the panel is pleased that improvement of retention and graduation rates is a major priority, in keeping with the University's own values as well as the priorities of the CSU system.

The panel would like to call attention to the following areas for continued effort.

Assessment and program review (CFRs 1.2, 2.2-4, 2.6-7, 4.3-7). The University should continue to work toward participation of all programs in assessment and program review, and establish a timetable for reaching the goal of 100% participation. The incentives described in the conference call (e.g., linking of assessment activities to approvals for new faculty lines and introduction of new programs) sound promising, but they will only be effective if applied consistently over an extended period of time. At the same time, efforts to make assessment less burdensome and more sustainable should continue. Steady leadership from the provost and deans will be essential.

It will also be important to ensure that assessment postings on the University website are accurate and up to date. Program reviews need to take place as scheduled, and those reports, too, need to be posted in a timely fashion.

As a next step toward integrative learning and effective assessment, the University should work to define its institutional learning outcomes and then align them with general education and program outcomes. The University's participation in the Association of American Colleges and Universities' VALUE and LEAP projects should provide valuable support and guidance in this area.

Development of EER themes (CFRs 1.1, 1.5, 2.10, 3.2). The panel was impressed by the University's clear commitment to integrative learning, community connections, and particularly inclusive excellence. The Diversity Master Plan, as noted above, is a major accomplishment in itself, but now it must be successfully implemented. It was unclear to the panel who, exactly, would bear primary responsibility for overseeing implementation of the plan and assessment of its effectiveness. Successful implementation will require dedicated and consistent leadership, as well as targets and a focus on results.

Leadership transitions (3.1, 3.8, 3.10). The University appears to have weathered several major leadership transitions smoothly. The search for a permanent president is proceeding, with an appointment expected in summer 2011; meanwhile, key positions have been filled with an experienced team. The issues noted in this letter, as well as renewed strategic planning, will require focus and leadership from that team. Finally, the continuing economic downturn and pressure on the CSU system budget will demand skillful financial and enrollment management in order to minimize the impact on academic quality and to support the initiatives underway.

Improvement of graduation and retention rates (CFRs 1.7, 2.10-11, 4.3-7). There are two ways to think about "results." First, the implementation of a course, a program, an event, or other activity can be viewed as the "result" of a plan or grant or other initiative. Second, the "result" can be understood as the actual change and improvement – in GPR, retention rate, survey data, or other metric – that comes *as a result* of that activity. WASC appreciates the first kind of result as a necessary foundational step, but it is not sufficient; what WASC is most interested in is the second kind of result.

SJSU has performed well in the first sense. The panel was impressed by the quality of effort and number of activities and processes that the University has introduced. However, in future it will be essential to shift the focus from the activities themselves to the effectiveness of those

activities in relation to defined targets, with data disaggregated to reflect the experience of various student subpopulations. While the report offered some data in this regard, e.g., improved success rates of students in STEM disciplines, future reviewers will expect to see much more. Moreover, while the need for specific, disaggregated, and improved results is perhaps most apparent in the area of student success data, it applies equally to student learning, program review, and diversity.

The panel acted to:

1. Receive the Interim Report with commendations and recommendations noted in this letter.
2. Request that the areas discussed above be addressed in the next reaccreditation cycle.

The panel and I would like to reaffirm our appreciation for the hard work that SJSU has done and the steps that have been taken to address the issues discussed in the Interim Report. I look forward to working with you and wish you every success as you proceed. If there is any way in which I can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara D. Wright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and "W".

Barbara D. Wright
Vice President

cc: Dennis Jaehne, AVP, Undergraduate Studies and WASC ALO, SJSU
Members of the Interim Report Committee