



March 2, 2005
Revised April 11, 2005

Don W. Kassing
Acting President
San Jose State University
One Washington Square
San Jose, California 95192-0031

Dear President Kassing:

At its meeting on February 17-18, 2005, the Commission considered the report of the Capacity and Preparatory Review team that visited San Jose State University on October 13-15, 2004. The Commission also had access to the Institutional Presentation prepared by the University for the visit. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you; Robert Cooper, Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs; Bethany Shifflett, Chair of the Campus Steering Committee; Dorothy Poole, Assistant to the President for Institutional Planning; Nancie Fimble, Associate Dean of the School of Business; and Pamela Stacks, Associate Vice President of Graduate Studies and Research. Your comments were helpful.

The San Jose State University Capacity and Preparatory Review Report was framed around the Standards of Accreditation. The resources and exhibits in the Institutional Web Portfolio were well organized and well presented. There was evidence that the campus community was involved in the discussion of issues and challenges that framed the reflective essays. During the campus visit, the team was able to interact extensively with faculty leaders, and noted the active participation of a wide range of individuals. The team observed that the educational mission and core values of San Jose State University as a metropolitan university are widely shared by the campus community.

The team noted that the University responded well to the issues raised by the Commission during its 1995 WASC accreditation cycle, particularly the development of a general education curriculum that includes carefully articulated learning outcomes and an assessment process, the appointment of an assessment director, the development of multiple programs and resources that enhance multicultural education and student support, and an increase in external support for faculty research and the building of a new library. Budgetary constraints, however, have interfered with the University's ability to hire more full-time faculty.

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The Commission endorses the findings and recommendations of the team and requests that the institution consider those recommendations in preparing for its Educational Effectiveness Review. In addition, as the University moves forward, the Commission highlighted the following issues for attention:

Quality of the University Presentation and Self-review. The Commission noted that there was a significant disconnect between the Institutional Proposal submitted and approved in July 2002 and the Capacity and Preparatory Review Presentation completed in 2004. The Proposal identified goals for a comprehensive review that focused on institutional issues and challenges facing San Jose State University, including the alignment of budget and academic program planning, the assessment of academic programs and student support services, the feasibility of new long-range objectives, and enrollment management planning. Although the Proposal indicated that the campus would be selective in its focus for each review, there was no indication of how the decision was made to focus on enrollment management for the Capacity and Preparatory Review and on student development and success for the Educational Effectiveness Review, and why only one topic was selected for each review, given the number of issues cited in the original Proposal.

Since the Institutional Proposal operates as a framework for the accreditation review and its fulfillment is, itself, a demonstration of institutional capacity, the Commission was disappointed that there was little evidence in the entire presentation of analysis, reflection or identification of future actions to be taken. For the one theme the University ultimately selected – enrollment management – there was no plan of action or improvement developed.

The reflective essays in the Capacity and Preparatory Report were organized around the University's capacity to meet the four WASC Standards. Although links were provided to supporting documents, there was little evidence in the report that the University is collecting and using data throughout the institution for decision making (Criterion for Review (CFR) 3.8). When data were presented in the Capacity and Preparatory Review, e.g. the NSEE, HERI and other relevant surveys, there was little evidence of analysis or indication of how the University uses the data for improvement (CFR 4.5). Thus, the Commission did not find that the Institutional Presentation, or the self-review process, was at a level of quality expected of an institution as long-accredited as San Jose State University. As the University prepares for its Educational Effectiveness Review, the Commission will expect the report to provide evidence that the campus has been deeply engaged in the self-review process, has produced data, analyzed the results and proposed specific actions for improvement, particularly in the area of student development and success, which is the primary focus of the review. The Commission action has extended the Educational Effectiveness Review to provide the University more time to demonstrate that it has addressed these issues and the others cited in this letter and in the team report.

Assessment and Educational Effectiveness. The University has undertaken a number of approaches to assessment of the general education program and has begun to develop results from these efforts. Still, it is not clear how the University has made improvements or changes in response to the data collected. The focus, however, is on the course level. The University will ultimately need to assure that the intended outcomes of the general education program, and of the baccalaureate program, are assessed at the time of graduation and reflect the cumulative learning experiences of students. Moreover, beyond general education there was little evidence of a comprehensive, institutional commitment to assessing student learning. A visit to the University's Institutional Portfolio revealed that the Academic Program Planning Guidelines require departments to develop assessment plans. However, the emphasis on assessment appears to be more on program improvement than on student learning. Program reviews should not only provide evidence that departments have identified learning outcomes but also that they collect quantitative and qualitative evidence of educational effectiveness and evidence use the results from assessment of student learning to make appropriate changes in the curriculum and approaches to teaching. (See, for example, CFR 2.2 and 2.6.) Although some departments have conducted surveys, few have established methods for reviewing and analyzing student work with the goal of improving learning. While the Educational Effectiveness Review will focus on evidence of student learning and how these results are used for improvement, appropriate structures and processes to assess educational effectiveness should be evident in the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CFR 4.3). The University will need to show that these structures are fully in place as it moves forward to the Educational Effectiveness Review.

Plans to assess the effectiveness of student support services seem to be in place. The Educational Effectiveness Institutional Presentation needs to include documentation of the results of assessment and actions taken in student support services and academic programs, including General Education. In response to questions about Educational Effectiveness, the Commission has prepared a draft document to provide a framework for Educational Effectiveness under the Standards. A copy of the document is enclosed. The University may find it useful to review its performance in relationship to the framework.

Institutional Planning. The University has the capacity to engage in institution-wide planning, as evidenced by its commitment to address "data gaps" in institutional research, the approval of the Academic Program Planning Guidelines, and the decision to focus on enrollment management in the review process. The leadership transitions, however, over the past several years have interfered with the development of a strategic plan that integrates assessment throughout the institution. The development of a campus commitment to a shared vision with carefully articulated goals and performance indicators needs to begin immediately. A major challenge facing San Jose State University will be to identify priorities and align resources appropriately. Decision making needs to be based on carefully selected data that can be used at all levels of the University. The plan needs to include a focus on the improvement of student learning as the campus prepares for its Educational Effectiveness Review. During the conference call with the Commission, it was indicated that a planning

process had been initiated. The Commission is concerned that the approaches to planning among the University Planning Council, the Resource Planning Board and the Goal Advisory Council may be so segmented that they make the integration of planning and resource allocation to support institutional goals and priorities difficult (CFR 4.2).

Enrollment Management, Diversity and Student Success. Although the University has a number of programs and services to enhance and sustain student diversity, the Commission agrees with the team that the campus needs to carefully assess the relationship of demographic, curricular and cocurricular diversity, and campus climate to student success, retention, graduation rates for all students. This analysis should be a component of University-wide enrollment management planning, and the data should be a regular part of program review. As the enrollment management plan is developed, the University will have to make some hard decisions about the program priorities of the institution, the size and balance between undergraduate and graduate programs, the process of program planning, and the relationship of retention and graduation to enrollment management. The Commission expects the University to move forward with a comprehensive enrollment management plan as it prepares for its Educational Effectiveness Review, and to the extent possible, to integrate this plan with strategic planning processes.

In summary, the Commission finds that, although San Jose State University is aware of its own strengths and challenges and is working steadily to involve all campus constituencies as it moves forward under new leadership, its Capacity and Preparatory Review did not demonstrate full compliance with Standard 4, particularly CFR 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5, and CFR 3.8 in Standard 3. The Commission is also concerned that the University needs more time in order to prepare for its Educational Effectiveness Review and to address the issues identified in the team report and those outlined in this letter.

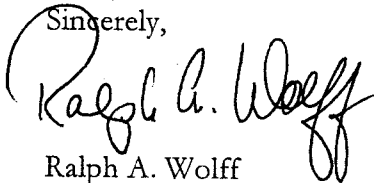
The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Preparatory Review Report and continue the accreditation of San Jose State University.
2. Extend the Educational Effectiveness visit to spring 2007. The Institutional Presentation is due 12 weeks prior to the visit.
3. Schedule a Special Visit in spring 2006 to address capacity issues (Standard 4). The format of the special visit report should follow that suggested in the enclosed memorandum. *The Guide for Special Visits* will be mailed shortly. Four copies of the report will be due two months before the visit.

In accordance with Commission policy, we request that you send a copy of this letter to Chancellor Charles Reed.

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments about 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, looping initial "R".

Ralph A. Wolff
Executive Director

RW/brn

Cc: John D. Welty
Robert Cooper
Members of the team
Cecilia Gray

Enclosures