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**Office of the Provost / VP
for Academic Affairs**

James E. Lyons, Sr.
President
California State University, Dominguez Hills
1000 E. Victoria Street
Carson, CA 90747

Dear President Lyons:

At its meeting on February 15-16, 2007, the Commission considered the report of the Capacity and Preparatory Review team that conducted the visit to California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) on October 9-11, 2006. The Commission also had access to the Capacity and Preparatory Report prepared by the University prior to the visit and your response dated December 8, 2006. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you; Jamie Dote-Kwan, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs; Caron Mellblom, Professor of Special Education; Shirley Lai, Associate Professor, Teacher Education; and Boice Bowman, Interim President and Vice President, Student Affairs. Your comments were helpful.

The CSU, Dominguez Hills Capacity and Preparatory Review report reflected a thorough and well-designed process that led to extensive campus engagement and worthwhile reflection resulting in recommendations for improvement. In so doing, the University appeared to use the WASC process effectively to achieve many of the goals and outcomes set forth in the institutional Proposal: improving academic quality in terms of enhanced achievement of student learning outcomes; building structures and processes to improve educational effectiveness; and capitalizing on the region's uniquely diverse community in its appreciation of diversity. The team anticipates that the focus on civic engagement, as expressed in the Proposal, may be more fully realized in the Educational Effectiveness Review.

From its review of the team report and institutional materials, the Commission found several areas for commendation.

Faculty Commitment and Engagement. The team's findings frequently reference the commitment and quality of the CSUDH faculty. Students report ready access to faculty even though faculty carry heavy workloads occasioned by diminished resources. Faculty also are credited by the team for their positive collaboration with University administration, effective efforts around recruitment and retention, and initiation of innovative strategies to help orient and support

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entering students toward academic success. The continuing institutional shift from a teaching to a learning orientation is seen as a result of the responsiveness and engagement of the faculty to learn the implications of this critical approach to quality and student success.

Institutional Mission and Diversity. The mission of CSUDH to serve a highly diverse student population in a highly multicultural environment pervades planning activities and institutional conversations. From the array of student life programs offered on campus to institutional interactions with regional neighbors, the values of diversity are reflected in a consistent manner. There is a high degree of understanding of the distinctive and often disadvantaged student population which CSUDH serves. The team observed an evident pride among students, staff, and faculty in the clarity with which the institution implements its mission to its diverse stakeholders.

Academic Culture and Structures. The well-regarded institutional Proposal identified an intention to use the accreditation process to move CSUDH toward more fully becoming a learning-centered institution. While WASC may not have been the only force in this direction, the team found evidence that this outcome was in the process of being achieved, including in the University's distance education programs, with frequent reference to the effectiveness and quality of the curricula being offered.

Resource Creativity. While CSUDH has been significantly impacted by its inability to reach enrollment targets, the institution has responded by increasing its focus on recruitment, resulting in a steady inflow of new first-year students. With a new and well managed focus on retention, the institution anticipates steady net FTE increases in coming years. Through bold initiatives, such as the alliance with Home Depot that created an on-campus event center, the launch of new degree programs, and campus-wide participation in the University Budget Committee, the institution has maintained fiscal discipline without curtailing the hiring of necessary faculty. The team concluded that CSUDH is displaying creative and resourceful strategies that bode well for its future.

In summary, notwithstanding significant challenges, CSUDH has shown demonstrable progress since its last review, and demonstrated success in utilizing its resources—human, physical and financial—effectively in support of institutional capacity. The team noted the positive impact on the Capacity and Preparatory Review of a strong academic leadership team; their role will be vital in sustaining the focus between the Capacity and Effectiveness Review and the upcoming Educational Effectiveness Review.

The Commission, in acting to receive the team report, endorsed its findings and recommendations. In addition, in anticipation of the Educational Effectiveness Review, the University will need to give continuing attention to the following areas:

Leadership Transitions. Subsequent to the team's visit, the announcement of your retirement was made, as was your subsequent appointment to a new position in Maryland effective prior to the end of the current academic year. It will be important for the University to sustain the momentum created by the Capacity and Preparatory Review process and to achieve the outcomes set forth in its Proposal for the Educational Effectiveness Review,

especially as the University transitions from an interim president to its next president. Your visible and consistent support of the WASC accreditation process has had a very positive impact on the University. The Commission expects that it will be continued by your successor. (Criteria for Review (CFR) 1.3 and 3.10)

Data-supported Enrollment Management. As indicated above, the University has undertaken many creative efforts to support student success. In keeping with CFRs 2.10 – 14, the attention given by faculty and staff to student recruitment, orientation, and retention toward degree completion warrant the institution's continued best efforts. The Student Retention Policy Council, though a somewhat new entity, should be encouraged and supported in its endeavors to become aligned with various campus success initiatives. Evidence of effectiveness of these and other strategies, in both the academic and the cocurricular aspects of students' experience, should be carefully tracked and evaluated, with improvements made as warranted. Committee structures related to enrollment planning, though broadly inclusive at CSUDH in keeping with CFR 4.1-2, may need to be streamlined while maintaining their focus on quality improvement. As noted by the team, the University could do more to draw students more extensively into these success-related enrollment management efforts.

Data-rich Effectiveness Analysis. The team observed that the University collects more data than it is able to reflect on systematically and consistently. This may have been influenced by the fact that, at the time of the team visit, the Institutional Research position was vacant. By the time of the Educational Effectiveness visit, the acquisition and use of data for improvement and the setting of performance standards, now often occurring quite effectively at the department level, need to rise to the level of the overall institution (CFR 4.4) for analysis and cross-department/unit comparisons, and involve the many stakeholders impacted (CFRs 4.6 and 4.8). Student achievement data should also be collected and analyzed to improve the effectiveness of course design, pedagogy, and assessment strategies (CFR 4.7). In addition, assessment results should be more visibly linked to institutional planning, priorities, and resource allocation (CFR 4.2).

Tracking Access and Success Data. The institution needs to more extensively obtain and use information related to recruitment, retention, and completion or graduation rates. Such data should be disaggregated by students' characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, transfer status, etc., and by discipline so that the University can track trends over time. Further, the University should assess the impact of the innovative strategies it has implemented to improve graduation rates, and compare its results with similar CSUs and institutions outside the CSU system. Building on such analyses, the University should also move to set achievement goals in these areas.

The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Capacity and Preparatory Review Report and continue the accreditation of California State University, Dominguez Hills.

2. Proceed with the Educational Effectiveness visit scheduled for February 6-8, 2008. The Institutional Presentation is due 12 weeks before the visit.
3. Request that the institution incorporate its response to the issues raised in this action letter and the major recommendations of the CPR team report in its Educational Effectiveness Report. This may be done by referencing where these responses are in the Table of Contents or in an addendum to the Report.

The Commission also requested that a meeting be held within a reasonable period after the arrival of the new president, to discuss with WASC staff, the accreditation process and the forthcoming Educational Effectiveness Review. Please contact Ray Lui in the WASC office to schedule this meeting after the new president has started.

In accordance with a recently adopted Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to Chancellor Charles Reed and the Chair of the CSU Board of Trustees within approximately one week. It is the Commission's expectation 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 or comments about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Ralph A. Wolff
President and Executive Director

RW/brn

- cc: John D. Welty
Board Chair
Charles Reed
Jamie Dote-Kwan
Members of the team
Richard Winn