



July 6, 1998

Raymond Orbach
Chancellor
University of California, Riverside
900 University Avenue
Riverside, CA 92521-4009

Dear Chancellor Orbach:

At its meeting on June 24-25, 1998, the Commission considered the report of the evaluation team that visited your campus February 10-13, 1998. The Commission also had available to it the self study prepared by the University in preparation for this visit and the University's responses to the team report. The Commission appreciated the University's response to the team report and the opportunity to meet with you and Robert Gill.

The University and WASC agreed to enter into an experimental self study and visit organized around the University's planning processes and objectives rather than focusing primarily on an examination of the nine WASC Standards. The University and WASC agreed that the effort would implicitly speak to the nine WASC Standards but that the self study itself would be a comprehensive assessment of the University as it plans to meet the demands of higher education in the particular style for which it has become recognized. This experimental approach provided the University with the opportunity to identify priorities and plan programs coherently. The title of the self study ("Undergraduate Education in the Context of the Research University") puts the emphasis of the visit clearly in perspective. In the words of the visiting team, the title "pointed the committee's attention to various questions concerning curriculum and the quality of instruction." The team discovered that "administrators and faculty with whom the committee talked . . . [were]

P. O. Box 9990
Mills College
Oakland, CA 94613-0990
PHONE: 510.632.5000
FAX: 510.632.8361
E-MAIL: wascsr@wasc.mills.edu
INTERNET: www.wascweb.org

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well aware of the self-study premises that ‘the intellectual process must drive the change process.’”

The Commission recognizes and commends the University for being one of the first to undertake an “experimental” self study. It has been the Commission’s desire to create new accreditation models which would provide 1) a more simple and efficient means of assuring basic accountability, 2) permit self studies to be more aligned with institutional priorities and 3) to use processes that would contribute more meaningfully to the improvement of institutions. The Commission is very pleased to learn that this new approach proved to be useful to the University and was a better alternative to the traditional self study and visit format previously used.

The team found much to commend in its visit, including UCR’s vision of its future as an institution, a bold sense of institutional confidence rooted in a record of academic excellence, a demonstrated commitment to diversity in its student enrollment, a remarkable interest in and responsibility for its immediate community, and a commendable attention to student needs, evidenced by its strong advisement program. The Commission lauds UCR’s innovative and commendable relationship with its neighbors, exemplified by “its launching a large-scale collaborative effort in the [U]niversity’s surrounding neighborhood designed to improve educational and employment opportunities for neighborhood youth. In these efforts, the [U]niversity successfully demonstrates both its capacity and commitment to place its institutional resources and expertise in the service of its immediate community.” The Commission took particular note that the visiting team identified the involvement of undergraduate students in active research (“well-designed projects done by students that often led to publications in scientific journals”) as one of the major strengths of UCR’s educational activity.

The Commission also commends the University for its demonstrated efforts to respond to concerns identified by the Commission in its last action letter and by the previous visiting team. There has been sustained progress and “UCR is a fundamentally sound institution that is fulfilling its mission effectively (and) enjoys a remarkable degree of institutional loyalty displayed at all levels.”

The evaluation team identified a number of important recommendations. The Commission endorses those recommendations and hopes that the University will give

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them its consideration. In addition, the Commission wishes to highlight a number of areas warranting special attention. The University community should address and resolve these concerns as it proceeds with its "broadly ambitious vision about its roles in the system, region, and community."

Alignment of planning objectives and fiscal constraints: The Commission shares the concerns of the evaluation team about the planned growth of the University without the firm assurances of commensurate financial resources. The Commission urges the University to manage its resources such that anticipated enrollment increases will not adversely impact the high quality of education and student life on campus. It will be important for the University to manage the anticipated growth carefully as it moves ahead with meeting student enrollment demands so that faculty workload and research productivity remain in balance. The Commission endorses the team statement that:

Timely and effective consultation on budgeting and planning will be vital to preserving the quality of UC Riverside if fiscal circumstances require deviation from the planned enrollment target . . . Ample consultation utilizing the 'culture of evidence' approach that WASC recommends would be suitable means to avoid the feared negative consequences.

The Commission encourages the University to continue its deliberate analysis of planning assumptions and strategies and to monitor closely the impact of enrollment increases on academic programs, student life and financial responsibilities.

Assessment and Curriculum and the Quality of Instruction: The Commission commends UCR for its record of academic excellence and its strong involvement of undergraduate students in research. In order to guarantee continued academic excellence, it is essential that UC Riverside balance the expansion of its academic programs with scrupulous attention to the needs of its students, staff, and academic and administrative services. The Commission urges UCR, during this time of institutional growth, to sustain its academic excellence as well as its active student participation in research. The Commission encourages the University to seize this time as an opportunity to identify what it expects students to learn, to evaluate its effectiveness in meeting those expectations, and to effectively integrate its findings into future planning.

Faculty Development: The Commission recommends that UCR maintain an engaged and

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well-trained faculty committed to undergraduate and graduate teaching while encouraging and supporting their commitment to research and scholarship. The Commission joins the team in urging the University to retain a high-quality faculty by focusing greater attention on improving its research facilities. The team observed that the "research facilities are perceived to have deteriorated throughout the University of California system, leading to an adverse impact on the educational and research efforts throughout the state." The Commission anticipates that UCR will pay particular attention to this concern, that it will develop strategies to retain a faculty that can engage students actively in research, and that it will maintain state-of-the-art facilities that promote and nurture a high quality of education and research.

The Commission acted to:

1. Reaffirm the accreditation of the University of California, Riverside.
2. Request ten (10) copies of a Fifth-Year report due November 1, 2003. Enclosed is a memorandum providing guidance on the format and content of the Fifth-Year report.
3. Schedule the next comprehensive visit for the spring of 2008. A draft of the self study undertaken in preparation for the visit will be due October 15, 2007. The final self-study report will be due two months before the site visit.

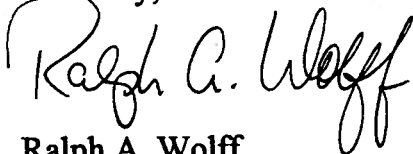
The Commission wishes to encourage the University to collaborate with WASC in the further development of new visit models and Data Portfolios. The Commission is very interested in continuing to develop approaches to accreditation which have external credibility and provide value to institutions. As the commission is now undertaking a review of its current practices, processes and Standards, it welcomes the active involvement of the University of California, Riverside in this process. The Commission believes that the collaborative tone established in this accreditation process could serve as a model for the future.

In accordance with Commission policy, we request that you send a copy of this letter to the Office of the President of University of California.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ralph A. Wolff". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Ralph A. Wolff
Executive Director

RW/brn

cc: David K. Winter
Robert Gill
Erwin Seibel
Members of the Team

Enclosure

