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January 19, 2011

George R. Blumenthal
Chancellor
University of California, Santa Cruz
1156 High Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95064

Re: Fall 2010 Interim Report to WASC

Dear Chancellor Blumenthal:

At its meeting by conference call on January 14, 2011, a panel of the Interim Report Committee convened to consider the Interim Report submitted by the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) on December 15, 2010. The panel reviewed your Interim Report and related documentation and the Commission's action letter of June 30, 2005, in which UCSC's accreditation was reaffirmed for a period of ten years with a request for an Interim Report to be submitted in Fall 2010. In this letter, the Commission requested that the Interim Report address six areas identified in that letter and discussed in depth in the February 2005 team report.

The panel appreciated the opportunity to discuss the report with Alison Galloway, Campus Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor; Herbert Lee, Vice Provost, Academic Affairs; Margaret Delaney, Vice Chancellor, Planning & Budget; Julian Fernald, Director, Institutional Research; Betsy Moses, Principal Analyst, Academic Program Planning; Tirus Miller, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies; and William Ladusaw, Interim Dean, Humanities and WASC ALO. The conversation was very helpful to the panel in understanding UCSC's progress and challenges in addressing the areas cited in the Commission's letter.

The panel found the report to be exceptionally thorough in addressing the matters identified by the team and Commission. The report was very well organized, cogent, and based on a strong foundation of evidence that was thoughtfully analyzed and presented. The panel found that UCSC had made progress and had engaged the campus widely on these important areas. The panel observed a good balance of strategic vision and pragmatic approaches to the financial challenges facing the university and a willingness to adjust to the dynamic environment in appropriate ways.

The panel found progress in each area, as noted below, and both commends UCSC for this progress and notes where continued attention is encouraged.

Planning for growth in graduate education and research while sustaining undergraduate excellence. In the five years since the Educational Effectiveness Review, UCSC's undergraduate enrollment has increased by about 28 percent to nearly 15,000 students while graduate enrollment has increased 31.5 percent to about 1,450 students. As explained in the report, the increase in the undergraduate enrollment was necessary to accommodate the growth plans for the entire University of California system at the same time that budget cuts have slowed the development and implementation of new programs, which are necessary to increase graduate enrollments. The number of graduate programs has grown along with a substantial increase in contract and grant revenue. The panel appreciated hearing about how the campus and the system are working through funding issues and found the administration's approach to these complex funding matters to be thoughtful and effective, combining strategic principles with practical solutions and flexibility, which are all essential as the UC faces severe state budget cuts. The panel encourages further exploration of the issue of balancing undergraduate and graduate growth in a way that serves the mission and promotes excellence at both levels. (CFRs 2.2, 3.5, 4.1-4.3)

Considering organizational structures to support planned growth. UCSC has now effectuated plans in place at the time of the 2005 visit to separate administrative roles of the Vice Chancellor for Research from the Vice Provost/Dean of Graduate Studies. This change has resulted in providing the leadership roles needed for planned development and growth. (CFRs 3.8, 3.10, 4.1-4.3)

Integrating general education with the major to ensure a coherent curriculum. UCSC has adopted new general education requirements, effective for the Fall 2010 entering class. These requirements are framed by learning outcomes and course objectives, which has allowed for courses within majors to meet general education requirements. This change has resulted in much greater integration of general education with the major and holds great promise to ensure a coherent curriculum and high levels of student learning. The panel urges UCSC to proceed to develop plans for the assessment of general education and to provide findings from initial assessments at the time of the next visit. (CFRs 2.2, 2.3, 2.6, 2.7, 4.6-4.8)

Achieving a diverse campus through targeted recruitment, academic experiences and better retention. The panel found that UCSC has taken concrete steps to improve the diversity of the campus through initiatives in the Chancellor's Office, Division of Student Affairs, Division of Graduate Studies, and through processes to conduct academic and staff searches. Among the many programs are several recruitment initiatives, which have resulted in enrollment increases of students from partner high schools and regional community colleges; academic support that is targeted to specific challenges such as the lack of preparation in writing and mathematics; special advising and support for low-income, first-generation students; the creation of a Diversity and Inclusion Program with a coordinator; diversity workshops and events; and graduate-level scholarships for students from underrepresented groups. The panel encourages continued attention to diversity before the next visit so that UCSC can show an improvement in the diversity of the student body, faculty and staff and evidence of student achievement for all groups. The considerable work in understanding and improving retention is described below. (CFR 1.5, 3.1, 3.2)

Understanding and Improving Retention. Six-year undergraduate graduation rates have improved: the rate for the 1997 first-year cohort was 66 percent and the rate for the 2003 cohort was 73 percent. One-year retention rates have also improved. UCSC continues to have lower rates than many other UCs and other large comprehensive research universities, e.g., the UC average is 79 percent. Data show continued disparities for some racial-ethnic groups although these gaps have narrowed. UCSC has engaged in deep study and analysis of retention and persistence toward completion in a concerted effort to identify which students do not complete and why. The panel found the analysis of the data provided in the report to be very sophisticated and useful in pinpointing areas for attention. Student affairs, academic leadership, faculty, and institutional research have all played their parts in developing programs to improve retention and graduation. The panel commends the many programs that have been designed to support students and to target specific areas, such as the change in timing for declaring a major and tracking students as they enroll in gateway courses. The panel urges UCSC to continue its work on improving retention and completion rates and eliminating achievement gaps and encourages the campus leadership to support this work as plans and budgets are developed and adjusted during the current budget crisis. (CFR 2.6, 2.10-2.14, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3)

Continuing progress on accountability for student learning. UCSC has revised its program review process to address student learning outcomes and assessment. General education outcomes have been developed and a data portfolio developed to support program review. The academic administration has provided strong leadership and many of the faculty support assessment. The process of developing the new general education requirements has highlighted the importance of framing objectives in a way that enables learning to be assessed. Despite this substantial progress, only about half of the programs have stated and published learning outcomes. The panel urges UCSC to continue its work on student learning outcomes so that by the time of the next visit it can demonstrate that it has “student learning outcomes and expectations for student attainment ... at the course, program and ... institutional level” and is able to assess student learning and utilize the results of assessment for improvement. As noted above, preliminary results of assessment from the new general education requirements should also be provided. As reflected in the Standards, institutions are expected to provide evidence that they can show that students are learning what they are expected to learn. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.5-4.8)

As noted throughout this letter, the panel was quite satisfied that substantial progress had been made in all six areas. Further attention is needed in some areas as UCSC moves forward, even as the campus faces the financial challenges to California’s system of public higher education. The panel expressed confidence that UCSC is well positioned to continue its quest for excellence and has the leadership, talent and will that are needed for success.

After extensive discussion of the progress that has been made by UCSC in addressing these six areas, the panel acted to:

1. Receive the Interim Report with recommendations and commendations noted in this letter.
2. Request that UCSC report on further progress in these areas noted at the time of its report for the next WASC visit, which is scheduled for spring 2015.

Chancellor Blumenthal
January 19, 2011
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I look forward to continuing to work with you and wish you every success as you proceed toward the next stages of accreditation review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Therese Cannon", written in a cursive style.

Therese A. Cannon
Executive Vice President

cc: William Ladusaw, ALO
Members of the Interim Report Committee