

# UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS

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Chancellor at Davis

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Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor

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June 1, 2010

Therese A. Cannon  
Executive Associate Director  
Western Association of Schools & Colleges  
985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100  
Alameda, CA 94501

Dear Executive Associate Director Cannon:

Chancellor Linda Katehi has asked me to respond to the WASC action letter sent to UC Davis on May 10, 2010. My colleagues from UC Davis who participated in the call and I are very appreciative of the diligence with which you and the Interim Report team approached the UC Davis report.

I would like to begin by pointing out one minor "error of fact," in the letter. During the course of the call, Professor Winder McConnell referred to the proposed change of title for our current Teaching Resources Center. The new name under consideration is the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. The second paragraph on page 2 refers to the "Center for Research and Teaching," we want to be clear that no such entity currently exists or is planned.

Below please find comments on the specific recommendations:

## 1. Assessment of Student Learning and Program Review

Although we will make every effort to encourage the development of student learning objectives and assessment plans in all of our majors, it may be that we will fall short of WASC's timeframe for complete campus compliance. In light of fiscal retrenchment and setting priorities for how to best serve our students, some departments and programs may place the formal codification of outcomes and assessment at a lower priority than the activities directly related to teaching the lectures and laboratories that prepare our students for their futures. For our part, we will endeavor to facilitate faculty engagement in the SLO/assessment process. Our goal remains unchanged: we are committed to using our resources to deliver the best possible curriculum for our students.

## 2. Implementation and Assessment of General Education

UC Davis faculty members have been extremely responsible in their responses to WASC's recommendations for General Education as articulated in the team report and commission letter of 2003. As we noted in our report and during the conference call, phasing our development, implementation, and assessment activities was critically important to our objective so that we could

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deliver a revised GE curriculum to our students without impeding their time to degree, and without imposing excessive demands upon limited financial and human resources. Only after the faculty submitted, and the relevant Senate committees approved the actual courses that would meet our General Education objectives, could we be confident of exactly what we would be assessing. Therefore, we are now prepared to focus on the development phase of an assessment plan over the course of the 2010-2011 academic year, resulting in the submission of a plan with our proposal, and bringing to closure the expectations of our previous reaccreditation cycle.

Finally, we note that in your letter the interim report committee “urges” UC Davis in the direction of a culmination experience linked to GE assessment activity, the mode more commonly found at institutions such as the ones with which the team members are affiliated. However, we believe quite firmly that WASC’s own documents support our position that faculty are entitled to develop practices and policies that reflect the goals of their institution. On page 2 of the *Handbook of Accreditation* we read:

6. Develop systems of institutional review and evaluation that adapt to institutional context and purposes, build on institutional evidence, support rigorous reviews, reduce the burden of accreditation, and add value to the institution.

Further under the Commission Code of Good Practice and Ethical Conduct, on page 3 we find that the very first element in the code reinforces institutional autonomy related to its mission.

1. Appraise institutions in terms of their own stated purposes within the context of Commission Standards and interprets the Standards in ways that are relevant to the character of the particular institution, respecting institutional integrity and diversity.

UC Davis faculty members have been engaged in the redesign of General Education since 2003, and they continue to be committed to a faculty-driven process in the formulation of its assessment plan. Consequently, in order to make its position clear, the Academic Senate leadership may be communicating with you under separate cover.

If you have any questions about our institutional response, please be in touch with me.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Turner  
Vice Provost—Undergraduate Studies

/jec

c: Chancellor Katehi  
Provost Lavernia