

January 29, 2016

Dr. Jane Close Conoley
President
California State University, Long Beach
1250 Bellflower Boulevard
Long Beach, CA 90840-0115

Dear President Conoley:

At its meeting by conference call on January 21, 2016, a panel of the Interim Report Committee (IRC) convened to consider the Interim Report submitted by California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) on November 1, 2015. The panel reviewed the Interim Report, the Commission letter of February 28, 2011, and the Educational Effectiveness team report dated October 6-8, 2010.

The panel appreciated the opportunity to discuss the report with Provost David Dowell; Vice President for Administration and Finance Mary Stephens; ALO David Hood; Director of Program Review and Assessment Sharlene Sayegh; and Director of Faculty Development Terre Allen. The conversation was very informative and helped the panelists better understand the progress the institution has made in addressing the areas cited in the Commission letter.

The panel commended CSULB for the appreciable improvement that has taken place since the Educational Effectiveness Review in 2010: work is underway to explore the meaning of a degree from CSULB, which will position the university to respond well to Component 3 in the institutional review process for reaffirmation of accreditation; a number of initiatives have been launched to ensure that Long Beach continues to make progress on its goals of becoming equitable and inclusive; new leadership has strengthened communication and has set a tone for openness and transparency; and CSULB has emerged from a severe budget crisis with relatively limited damage to its academic programs. The panel was impressed with Long Beach's genuine commitment to enhance the quality of student learning and student success.

The panel expressed concerns about the nature of the report itself, which appeared to be descriptive in character and not particularly evidence-based. Panel members were troubled by the general lack of supporting documentation for the assertions and conclusions in the report. While the panel applauded the university's aspirations and the breadth of initiatives that are underway, they urge Long Beach, in its institutional report for comprehensive review, to move beyond listing activities and programs and to focus on evidence-based outcomes and impact.

The February 28, 2011 Commission letter identified several areas that required attention and further development by CSULB:

1. Assessment and Expectations for Learning

- How well are students meeting the institution's expectations for learning?
- How is the institution using the assessment of student learning to improve teaching and learning?
- What is the status of the assessment of institutional outcomes?

2. Long Term Financial Planning

- What is the status of the institution's long-term financial planning efforts?

3. Campus Culture

- In what ways, if any, has the campus culture changed as a result of efforts to promote diversity,

equity and inclusion?

The Interim Report Committee noted progress in each of these areas, though there is still room for improvement.

- a. **Assessment.** CSULB presented multiple examples of its extensive activities in assessment, which were mainly descriptive rather than analytical or reflective. The university provided descriptions of how well students are meeting the university's expectations for learning at program and course level, descriptions of how the university is using assessment to improve teaching, and the status of the assessment of institutional learning outcomes. However, the panel observed that little evidence was provided to support statements such as "students are meeting and exceeding the institution's expectations for student learning..." (p. 5). (CFRs 1.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6)
- b. **Long Term Financial Planning.** The panel appreciated learning about the university's financial planning efforts and the changes underway regarding budgeting and planning at the system level. The panel was pleased to hear that the worst of the state budget crisis appears to have passed. The panel especially commended Long Beach for handling past financial reductions in ways that enabled the university to retain its core values and principles and its focus on student success. The interim report, however, did not provide evidence of a shift in the university's approach to financial management from a period of budget constraint to a period of greater budgetary stability. The examples given on the conference call about investments in the physical and technological infrastructure were encouraging, but it would be helpful, as CSULB prepares for its comprehensive review, to show how financial planning is shifting/has shifted to a longer range, investment-based model guided by the strategic plan and by the analysis and interpretation of evidence regarding student success and the quality of the educational experience. (CFRs 3.4, 4.1, 4.3)
- c. **Campus Culture.** The panel praised for CSULB for the steps it has taken to enhance campus culture: improving diversity, stakeholder inclusion and transparency; strengthening communication throughout the campus; establishing student assessment partnerships; and better integrating marginalized voices into the campus community. The panel, though impressed by the scope and range of activities in this area, had hoped to see more evidence about impact. (CFRs 1.4, 2.10, 3.7)

After discussion of the progress that has been made by California State University, Long Beach in addressing areas cited by the Commission, the panel acted to:

1. Receive the Interim Report.
2. Request a progress report due February 1, 2018. As Long Beach prepares for its reaffirmation of accreditation, it will want to have in place an overarching, coordinated institutional strategy or high-level vision for what it wants to achieve in the area of student success. For the progress report, please briefly:
 - a. Define student success (accounting for both completion and achievement of student learning outcomes), given the mission, values and programs offered, and the characteristics of the students being served. (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.10, 2.13)
 - b. Provide at least two specific examples of institutional initiatives, programs or projects that have been particularly effective in promoting student success and learning. Include information about the evidence that the university has collected and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of these efforts and explain how the lessons that have been learned are being applied, as appropriate, to expand the effort to more students or to additional academic programs. (CFRs 2.6, 2.10, 2.13, 4.1, 4.3)
3. Continue the schedule for Long Beach's comprehensive review for reaffirmation of accreditation (Offsite Review in spring 2019; Accreditation Visit in fall 2019).

4. Recommend that CSULB continue its efforts in assessment, long term financial planning, and campus culture, and that the university in its institutional report for its comprehensive review pay particular attention to:
 - a. Providing qualitative or quantitative evidence to support statements and conclusions. It will be helpful to review the WSCUC document "Using Evidence in the WSCUC Accreditation Process: A Guide," available on the WSCUC website.
 - b. Incorporating additional institutional evidence-based analysis and reflection on the impact of institutional initiatives, in addition to descriptive information about university initiatives, activities, programs, and projects.

The panel, again, reaffirms the hard work and important steps that California State University, Long Beach has taken to address the issues that were the focus of the Commission letter. The Interim Report Committee looks forward to the institution's continued progress.

Please contact me if you have questions about this letter.

Sincerely,



Barbara Gross Davis, Ph.D.
Vice President

cc: David Hood, ALO
Members of the Interim Report Committee