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Report of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges
(WASC) Review Team *for* UCLA

UCLA chose to undergo a new form of accreditation in 1997/98 based upon a focused study of three significant campus-wide issues, rather than upon meeting traditional compliance standards. In addition, UCLA designed a web-based data portfolio rather than a broad self-study report. The WASC review team read the portfolio and several drafts of UCLA's reports on the three focused issues, and the team visited UCLA on March 5 and 6, and on June 1 and 2. During both visits, but particularly the first, the review team met with numerous faculty members, students, administrators and staff members, both in committee and individually, and engaged in active discussions on all relevant topics. UCLA was open, candid, and responsive to the review team's questions and comments, furnished all requested material, and met the spirit as well as the substance of accreditation.

The review team applauds and generally endorses the experimental form of accreditation chosen by UCLA. In our view it offers a *far* more productive and useful approach than the traditional, compliance-based *format*, which, according to WASC documents, proved to be of very limited value in at least the past two ten-year accreditation reports *for* UCLA. The new, issue-oriented *format* allows a large institution with multiple missions to pursue several strategic issues in depth across the entire campus, engages many constituencies in a broadly consultative process aimed at institutional enhancement, encourages campus leaders to set new goals, and

eschews report-writing for its own sake. We found that the two visit format proved to be instrumental in enabling the team to understand the issues at their various stages of development and to facilitate the university's progress. We also applaud UCLA for its selection of three bold topics of great significance to not only UCLA, but research universities generally: diversity, general education, and performance indicators. Moreover, the fact that these three important topics were consciously selected by UCLA at different stages of internal development, provided the team with the opportunity to review them as "case studies" of the university's ability to be internally reflective and able to make significant institutional improvements.

Following the WASC review team's first visit to campus in March, the team issued a report with preliminary findings and recommendations. UCLA took these findings and recommendations seriously and made significant progress in advancing all three topics and in developing conceptual reports addressing them. The Chancellor not only helped to formulate new approaches to the topics, but set up new campus processes and assigned individuals to lead them. In the second visit to UCLA the WASC review team found considerable momentum in all three areas, a clear sense of processes to be followed in the future, and growing integration of the three topics, which potentially blend well together. In fact, the review team believes that, if the already-evident progress continues to gain momentum, UCLA will be well ahead of most of its peers in addressing three complex, comprehensive issues of great moment in American higher education.

The portfolio, which is partially web-based, addresses the "spirit of WASC standards," namely the essence of those standards as distilled by UCLA

administrators. It is selective, not comprehensive, and assembles policies, key data and important speeches in the nine areas of WASC accreditation standards. It is accessible both on and off the campus and should be of some value to internal and external constituents. The team found it to be useful as an effective means to access basic data and policies. We believe that UCLA has met WASC's requirements, which are still experimental at this time. We suggest, for WASC's consideration, that in the future, universities be asked to furnish key strategic planning materials from units across the campus, and place portfolio materials in fully web-based format which can be easily updated during the 10 years following an accreditation report.

General Education

We are delighted to see on the UCLA campus a serious effort to reform the general education curriculum. UCLA has always had a strong reputation as a center of excellence in undergraduate and graduate education. In recent years, however, a number of faculty have expressed concern about the quality of the undergraduate general education program. Although many of the existing GE courses are superb, they believe, as we do, that UCLA's undergraduate program lacks educational coherence. Over time, it has become exceedingly complicated, with a multitude of requirements and courses. There is an absence of a clear statement of purpose framing curricular organization and content. Most importantly, the existing program does not provide the student with maximal opportunities for intellectual and creative development.

Reforming general education at complex institutions like UCLA is not easy. Up to now, many research universities have been unwilling to address the need for fundamental change in the way they educate their undergraduate students. To UCLA's credit, not only has the institution decided to improve undergraduate education, but what has emerged from the change process is an ambitious and bold new vision for undergraduate education. This vision, developed by a diverse group of faculty, students and administrators, took two years of intensive study and consultation. The original conception was for a maximum of 14 general education courses. The most ambitious part of the proposal, and at the heart of the vision, are what its authors call First-Year Clusters. In the plan, all freshmen would sign up for three interconnected and interdisciplinary courses taught by senior faculty and graduate student instructors. Students would explore one broad topic from a variety of disciplinary perspectives over three consecutive quarters. This design would give them firm grounding in the topic, introduce them to the benefits of interdisciplinary learning, and build a community of academic learners at the onset of their higher education experience.

It is impressive to see how much. UCLA's new model of undergraduate education has anticipated the recommendations of the Boyer Commission Report, Reinventing Undergraduate Education. Both that report and the UCLA proposal focus on the importance of a strong freshman foundation of interdisciplinary courses taught by teacher-scholars. Both also emphasized the need for teaching undergraduates critical thinking and writing and the importance of engaging in active learning within

strong academic communities. Current research on student development provides strong evidence of the value of such pedagogy.

UCLA's reform effort has already created significant institutional change. A new governance structure has been created to review new general education proposals. The Faculty Executive Committee in the College of Letters and Science has approved a proposal to expand the College writing requirements to a two-quarter sequence along the lines suggested in the GE proposal. Generous resources have already been allocated to finance the pilot clusters. A group of distinguished senior faculty have volunteered to pilot the first group of cluster courses. At each juncture along the way, the UCLA community has met this challenge.

The most difficult part of the process, gaining faculty approval to make the First Year Clusters a general undergraduate requirement, is yet to come. It is helpful that administrators and faculty responsible for the reform effort have shown themselves to be sensitive to faculty concerns. In the short span of time that we have been on campus, we have seen the original plan significantly modified. Systematic and careful assessment of the original proposal as well as experience with the first set of piloted clusters has led to significant modifications of the original proposal. In response to departmental concern about the cost of developing new courses for the clusters, the leadership has encouraged new clusters that take advantage of existing courses.

Although many faculty participate in interdisciplinary research, experience has shown that they are less comfortable in the classroom when the subject matter requires interdisciplinary teaching. For this reason, we were particularly interested in

UCLA's efforts to assist faculty and graduate instructors who will be teaching in the First-Year Clusters. We found current plans to provide advanced training seminars for teaching fellows and assistants well thought out and thorough. As a by-product, we think that these efforts will greatly enhance the preparation of graduate students for their future faculty roles as university and college faculty. We also applaud the design for faculty assistance, including the development of summer academies and technical assistance for new course development.

Based upon what we have found on our two visits on campus, we are confident that the undergraduate reform process will continue to evolve. The greatest challenge that lies ahead is gaining faculty approval to make the current proposal a general requirement. We are convinced that this is an important moment in UCLA's history. If the First-Year Cluster proposal is passed, UCLA will be in the forefront of the movement to improve undergraduate education in research universities.

Diversity

The Team visited UCLA during a time of significant stress related to the new constraints on admissions and affirmative action and a highly charged political and legal context. The challenges to diversity along with the need to rethink almost all aspects of diversity and, particularly admissions, cannot be underestimated. In addition, UCLA is experiencing a significant change in leadership. We commend the Chancellor for initiating a campus discussion of high level academic leaders and vice chancellors on the issue of diversity so soon after the WASC Review visit in March. As a result of this meeting, UCLA not only reaffirmed but deepened its commitment to

diversity as a core institutional value, with significance well beyond numerical representation of underrepresented minority students, faculty and staff.

To this end, the Chancellor assigned the incoming Executive Vice Chancellor to convene a committee of campus leaders to coordinate and manage a comprehensive approach to diversity. Indeed, the Chancellor has directed the committee to take up the comprehensive charge of developing an overarching vision statement on diversity for the campus that will guide institutional planning at all levels, assign responsibilities for meeting goals, encourage faculty diversity interests in teaching and research, and establish campus mechanisms for measurement of progress and outcomes. This is a critical need if diversity is to emerge as a part of strategic planning and thinking at UCLA.

In response to the Chancellor's meeting, the WASC workgroup on diversity has seized the initiative to begin the development of a comprehensive plan that moves the discussion of diversity to the core of institutional mission and programs while also addressing the more immediate issues raised by Proposition 209 for admissions. The plan is a strong effort to describe the relationship of diversity to the mission of UCLA in research, in engaging pressing policy issues in the society, as a civic member of Los Angeles, in scholarship, and in curriculum. We commend the workgroup and the Chancellor for setting an agenda that has the potential to address diversity at UCLA in substantive and critical ways.

The report of the work group suggests that some important elements are now in place: senior leadership, involvement of key academic senate committees, links between administrative and academic units, and a group of knowledgeable and

committed individuals. Moreover, reform of general education and the development of performance indicators hold promise to undergird the efforts in diversity.

The Outreach program represents a comprehensive and well integrated effort that is well designed to make a substantive difference over the longer term. The significant question here is whether UCLA and the UC system have committed sufficient resources to sustain the effort. The Blue and Gold scholarship program alone will require significant funds. The effort cannot be sustained without sufficient human and financial resources.

At the same time, the team recognizes that by engaging diversity in ways that focus on the mission of UCLA as a research institution, as an important partner in the Los Angeles and California communities as well as nationally and internationally, and as a teaching institution, profound changes in approach and planning will be needed. Important in this effort will be the development of indicators of progress that include representational issues, but that also focus on research, community involvement, and curriculum. The workgroup report suggests several areas where such indicators could be developed.

As UCLA moves forward, the team would like to suggest the following:

1. That the new coordinating committee for diversity maintain some continuity of membership from the workgroup so that the momentum now developed might be maintained.

2. That efforts be made to prioritize the strategies in order to give greater focus to important elements. Among these, the team suggests emphasis on governance and accountability, the development of indicators, and a fuller development of a mission

statement and educational goals that engage diversity as one of the compelling forces impacting the society, the economy, and civic democracy.

3. That UCLA reinvigorate efforts to rethink the basic assumptions of identifying excellence and merit in the admissions process. The admissions effort is clearly undergoing fundamental changes and challenges. The workgroup makes bold recommendations that UCLA might pursue. More research, both predictive and retrospective, sensitive to group and individual differences, might well provide new perspectives on indicators of success and excellence. With excellence as a core value, new approaches may develop that would benefit all students.

4. That faculty and administrative diversity and retention, continuing areas of concern, be best understood as a search for expertise in a variety of areas. in disciplines, in policy research, in applied and basic research on issues confronting the society. In addition, faculty searches should also include interest in those who have had experience, commitment, and success in working with students from diverse backgrounds. The reality is that special funds and programs have been used in some faculty hiring in the past to induce some departments to do things that normal processes could not. Now normal processes must be changed to focus on the essential qualities of mission and excellence that position diversity at the center of UCLA's ongoing development.

5. That the chancellor, executive vice chancellor, and deans take strong leadership roles in implementing the plan as it develops.

Performance Indicators

UCLA has further to go in developing performance indicators of institutional effectiveness than it does in the other two focus areas of general education and diversity. The University has decided, wisely we think, to begin by building an information system rather than starting the process by selecting the performance indicators. The goal is to improve the use of data and information for effective planning and decision making. As its report points out, UCLA is rich in data. The challenge is to transform these data into management information that can inform planning and decision making at the central administration as well as the department, school, and college levels. The indicators should evolve organically as UCLA develops and uses an integrated information system to assist in planning and decision making.

The University Administration created a Workgroup on Data Resources for Academic Planning to lead this transformation of collected data into management information. The Workgroup has a challenging charge. It must (1) identify the information required for planning; (2) develop an information system that addresses institutional and departmental needs; and (3) establish an integrated data system that fosters both institutional quality and external accountability. The membership of this Workgroup has broad representation from Academic Planning and Budget, Student Affairs, the administration of most of the Colleges and Schools, and the Graduate Division.

This Workgroup should benefit greatly from the Enterprise Information System developed by the Graduate Division. This System has built an innovative relational data warehouse that allows a variety of analyses and reports about graduate

programs and students. The Enterprise Information System affords a wealth of information on programs and students that is currently unavailable to other graduate and research universities. The current plan is to broaden this design into a data warehouse that includes management information on undergraduate as well as graduate programs and students. The Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs and Dean of the Graduate Division, who led the development of the Enterprise Information System, chairs the Workgroup on Data Resources and Academic Planning.

This Workgroup has two objectives. First, it will develop a proposal for a unified data base for presentation to the new Executive Vice Chancellor. Second, it will develop a report to the Executive Vice Chancellor regarding the indicators that will "inform campus leaders, promote more systemic, transparent, and consistent assessment of institutional and departmental performance."

The Chancellor has signaled his strong support by designating the Executive Vice Chancellor as the officer responsible for strategic planning on campus. UCLA's motive differs from that of many colleges and universities. Its interest in performance information and indicators is driven primarily by an internal desire to improve its performance rather than by the external demand to prove its accountability. The Accreditation Teams supports UCLA's presumption that improved performance is a prerequisite of external accountability.

This strategy for developing an integrated data warehouse and quality performance indicators seeks to avoid several pitfalls often found in the attempts of other colleges and universities. It combines "Top Down" and "Bottom Up" approaches that support the planning needs of both the central administration and the academic

units. It allows the central administration to decentralize decision making while providing the evidence required to assure that campus units are achieving institutional goals. It also provides the information academic units need to assess progress toward their unique goals and to present reasonable requests for their resource requirements. The ultimate goal is a data system that supports a common core of indicators for all academic units that reflects institutional goals coupled with a "customized" set of indicators that reflect unit aspirations and objectives. The review team applauds this approach to create a management information system that supports both institutional and unit requirements. We also commend the realistic approach of making better use of the wealth of available data rather than launching a costly effort to build new data systems. The commitment to link performance evaluation and strategic planning to the institutional emphasis on diversity and on general education shows that UCLA intends to make its information systems and its performance indicators meaningful by linking them to major university initiatives.

The Visiting Team supports UCLA's plan to integrate its information resources to guide planning and decision making; to connect its evaluation systems to priority goals; and to devise performance measures that satisfy both improvement and accountability. In tackling this difficult task of developing an information system and performance indicators that can serve its own goals, UCLA can forge a workable plan that may well assist not only itself but graduate and research universities across the country. The process put in place for developing performance information and indicators at UCLA is only a beginning. But we believe it is probably the best way for the University to begin the challenging task of developing a culture of evidence on

campus when making plans or decisions. UCLA has a process for developing the information and indicators required for effective strategic planning.

Conclusion

Higher education in the United States confronts major challenges. The next generation of students coming to us is larger and more diverse, with more complex educational needs than we have faced before. UCLA has courageously focused on three of the most vexing problems facing all of public education: providing the highest quality undergraduate education; meeting the challenge of educating a diverse citizenry; and becoming increasingly accountable to our students and the public.

It is by no means certain that UCLA will fully succeed in meeting its high ambitions. Its proposed revision of general education is highly innovative and draws on the special strengths of a great research university---but requires new ways of distributing resources, change in institutional culture, and a high level of faculty consensus. UCLA is among the most diverse public universities in the nation---but changing public policy will require imaginative new approaches to insure access to all groups of learners. UCLA is determined to be fully effective in meeting its institutional missions...but to do so will require breaking new ground in measuring its achievements and creating a culture of evidence to guide management. All of these initiatives are high risk ventures, and success will require commitment, imagination and perseverance

These are, however, risks worth taking. How and how well UCLA meets the three challenges of educational excellence, diversity and accountability has great

importance not only for its own faculty and students but for higher education nation wide. To fulfill its role as a national leader in higher education it is essential that UCLA share its experiences in institutional change so that lessons learned can benefit other colleges and universities in California and across the nation. Deep change requires time and we recommend that UCLA's five year interim report demonstrate that institutional change has occurred and that progress has been made in the three initiatives undertaken in this accreditation report.