June 30, 2005

Norma S. Rees
President
California State University, East Bay
25800 Carlos Bee Blvd
Hayward, CA 94542-3011

Dear President Rees:

At its June 16-17, 2005 meeting the Commission considered the Capacity and Preparatory Review Report from the team, which visited California State University, East Bay (CSU EB) on March 15-18, 2005, the report prepared by the University in anticipation of the visit, and the response to the visiting team's report from the University, dated May 24, 2005. The Commission appreciated the benefit of your participation during its deliberations, as well as the contributions of Gale Young, Chair, WASC Planning Process; Donald Sawyer, Chair, Academic Senate; James Kelly, Provost; Sonja Redmond, Vice President of Student Affairs; and Bob Brauer, Executive Assistant to the President. Clearly, you and your colleagues have already taken comments of the team to heart, and the Commission responded positively to your willingness to address in a proactive fashion the challenges you face.

It has been clear from the beginning that CSU EB has been fully engaged in its current re-accreditation cycle. The institutional proposal and capacity review are rich with information and analysis, and contain helpful descriptions of accomplishments and challenges. The team commented that the institutional review and the report that resulted from it were "conducted thoroughly and completely, including the incorporation of its website." (Team Report, p. 3) The team added that, during the visit, "[e]very person that the team met is dedicated to this institution..." (p. 23)

Such engagement is further reflected in the detailed response the institution made to the visiting team's report. CSU EB began its response to the team's comments with a paragraph containing the following:

...we expected the team report to follow, more closely, the WASC Preparatory Review Team Report Format and to frame its concerns and recommendations by referencing the CFR's and the evidence we provide in the Capacity and Preparatory Review Report, the electronic portfolio and the Team Room, which rarely
occurred. We were puzzled and disappointed by the lack of clarity and focus in the summary and of findings and major recommendations. We especially need a clear direction for our Educational Effectiveness Review Process. (p. 1)

As noted above, the Commission did receive copies of the institution’s Capacity and Preparatory Review Report and has considered the conclusions reached in that document in framing its findings and recommendations. The Commission discussed the CSU EB concerns with the team chair in the Panel and has attempted to address the University’s concerns in this action letter. It has expanded this action letter, added references to Commission Standards, where appropriate, and tried to indicate areas for future University attention, building on the University’s own presentation and the team report. In addition, the Commission will instruct the visiting team, when it returns to campus for the Educational Effectiveness Review, to be more attentive to the use of evidence and to referencing the Standards and Criteria for Review (CFR) it applies. In addition, as reflected in the action letter, the Commission has added time for the visit to allow for a fuller engagement by the team.

On the other hand, the Commission does not wish to create the expectation that either the Capacity or the Educational Effectiveness reviews will establish institutional priorities for CSU East Bay. These reviews are designed to evaluate an institution’s core commitments, to assess the structures, the processes, the utilization of resources, and the planning within an institution, not to select between competing goals or values. It is the proper role of the institution, for example, to choose what the appropriate foci of its Educational Effectiveness Review should be; it is not the prerogative of the visiting team or the Commission.

The Commission does recommend that the remainder of the reaffirmation process be carefully focused. In its examination of the visiting team’s report, the Commission has isolated three sets of conclusions for special consideration. The first set reflects the team’s assessment of the institution’s current capacity in relationship to WASC Standards. The second set indicates the team’s evaluation of the institution’s readiness for an Educational Effectiveness Review. The third set refers to the University’s request for system authority in regard to overseas MBA programs. The Commission would invite CSU East Bay to share its progress made regarding the first and third sets of conclusions at the time of the next visit, but asks that the major thrust of the second visit remain educational effectiveness.

I. The Capacity of CSU East Bay

A. The Implementation of University-wide Strategic Plans. Since its last comprehensive visit in 1995, CSU EB has twice refined its mission and vision. However, as the visiting team found in 1995, and still true today “... the University lacks both a coherent process for setting future priorities and a comprehensive framework in terms of which to assess and improve its effectiveness” (WASC action letter, June 28, 1995, p. 2)
The authors of CSU EB’s Capacity and Preparatory Review Report confirmed this conclusion in December 2004.

Our biggest challenge is to develop a plan that will allow us to come together on an agreed set of priorities linked to our mission and student learning and to implement those priorities, assign responsibility and resources, track results, and assess those results for future improvements. (p. 33)

In other words, the institution continues to struggle with fulfilling WASC CFR 1.2 and 1.3, as well as 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and, in particular, 4.6. Despite evidence from the nine years between comprehensive visits that individual programs and initiatives succeed at CSU EB, evidence that greatly impressed a special visit team in 2000, the institution has failed to achieve coherence and consistency across its programs in terms of the mission. The campus frequently mentions that the financial policies of the State make coherent planning difficult and while the Commission understands the constraints this has placed on the University, the team also found that this explanation alone is not sufficient to explain the lack of progress. There are at least three additional areas that are more susceptible to institutional action: level of commitment, lines of communication, and comprehensive data management.

1. Commitment to the Implementation of University plans

The failure to implement comprehensive University-wide planning raises questions about the core commitment of the institution and its leadership to a fundamental aspect of capacity as articulated in first sentence of CFR 4.6, “Leadership at all levels is committed to improvement based on the results of the processes of inquiry, evaluation, and assessment used throughout the institution.”

While your letter of May 9, 2004 clarified for the team that Vice Presidents are required to show how budget allocations will further institutional plans, the team was not persuaded that an effective linkage had been maintained between budget and planning or that the campus had prepared itself fiscally to sustain critical initiatives:

At the time of the visit, CSU East Bay did not demonstrate a clear link between budgeting and planning, nor did written policies exist to show capacity and sustainability. The institution said, once again, that these elements were not totally within its control. This is not a satisfactory answer and is an issue of concern for the visiting team. (Team Report, p. 16)

Moreover, the team was not provided evidence that the outcomes anticipated by budget allocations have been monitored. As the visiting team wrote, the University’s Capacity and Preparatory Review Report, “. . . described extensively the planning and consultation efforts undertaken by the University, but did not describe as much progress in implementing the planning process as might have been expected . . .” (p. 3)
However, despite the additional information provided at the time of the visit, the team concluded that there continued to be a “. . . lack of concrete evidence of examples that verified the impact of the implementation of the planning and other processes.” (p. 29)

There is evidence in the team report, in regard to Instructional Technology, the Library, and Student Affairs, that successful programs, seemingly critical to the achievement of the University's mission, have not been appropriately recognized. In other words, there is a need for a more visible commitment of the institution and its leaders to inquire into the success (or failure) of initiatives and to act appropriately.

The current status of the new mission statement, unveiled in the early fall of 2004, typifies what concerned the team in regard to implementation at CSU East Bay. The team could not discover a "vision" concerning how one of its major goals, "multiculturalism" would be implemented. In fact, much of the campus seems to be acting without full knowledge of what is expected of them in order to meet this new goal. The team concludes that multiculturalism still "... needs to be infused across the campus and into its curricula, and student, faculty, staff and administrative recruitment." (p. 25)

In summary, the team reports a campus that plans, but has not demonstrated a commitment to follow through particularly in regard to budget allocations and the evaluation of outcomes. There is a need to develop systems of monitoring the progress toward achieving institutional goals, to budget accordingly, to evaluate implementation strategies, to assess their impact, and to correct mistakes so that priorities are moved from the drawing board and made an institutional reality. A formal structure for ensuring the implementation of strategic goals, understood by the entire university community, should be considered.

2. Lines of communication and coordination

One of the key findings of the visiting team was that CSU East Bay appears to lack adequate lines of communication and coordination by which it can maintain meaningful dialogue and information flow between all levels of the institution. The failure to diffuse the new mission statement across campus, mentioned above, is an example of such a communication problem. The very fact that the institution established an extensive framework outside normal channels to identify the aspirations and concerns of the campus community in preparation for the WASC review suggests that existing communication channels have not served the campus adequately. The team reported a break-down in communication and coordination relating to degree audits and financial aid systems, resulting in some financial aid being delayed as long as a quarter. (Team Report, pp. 9,10) It commented on "...a disconnect between the detailed and dynamic assessment and improvement activities that are continuing and expanding at the unit level and the institutional planning and institutional assessment process." (pp. 10, 11) In discussing community activities, the team notes, "The campus needs to find a way to organize, coordinate, manage, and disseminate information about all of the opportunities that exist, often in overlapping areas.” (p. 20) Later, the team found that the policies and practices relating to the distribution of overhead funds and other grant-related activities should be "formalized and widely communicated to faculty and staff.” (p. 20) In other words, there is some
question whether the current structures foster organizational communication that “... are clear, consistent with its purpose, and sufficient to support effective decision making.” (CFR 3.8)

3. Institution-wide Data Collection and Analysis

The University’s Capacity and Preparatory Review Report echoes the visiting team’s findings when it observes that, “... we cannot track the impact of budget cuts on services or best practices, and we cannot assess the effectiveness of plans across the university.” (p. 33)

To be sure, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment is now attempting to gather and analyze strategic indicators, but the task appears challenging and the visiting team was not sure if the Office had sufficient resources or authority to succeed. (Team Report, pp. 10-11) Without such data and analysis, it is unclear how it will be possible to hold units and their managers responsible for implementing University priorities and ensuring that critical areas are appropriately supported. (CFR 4.5) Tracking these items may be the responsibility of others as well and, if so, the same considerations apply.

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Given the unclear level of commitment, ineffective channels of communication, and limited experience with strategic indicators, the University has not established that it knows what is working or where best to invest resources to accomplish its goals. While state formulas are beyond the control of the University, the campus can, and should, take responsibility for the commitment of its leaders to implementing planning goals, to establishing effective lines of communication, and to providing the quality, analysis and distribution of data necessary for decision makers to assign scarce resources effectively.

The need for a robust planning and implementation cycle to take root at CSU East Bay was identified in 1995 in the team report and Commission action. While it appeared that progress had been made in reviewing the University’s interim report in 2000, the reports from the campus and conversations reported by the team continue to promise what should have already been well established and implemented. This is an important issue that relates to the University’s fulfillment of the expectations of Standards One and Four. Your presentation before the Commission indicated that the campus is aware of many of these problems and is already at work on them. The Commission urges that this work be given the highest priority and that evidence of real progress be demonstrated at the next review, since earlier promises have not been fulfilled.

B. Multiculturalism. In its Mission and Values, CSU East Bay commits to a “multicultural learning experience” and “multicultural competence.” However, the team observed that multiculturalism and its implications for the campus have not yet been diffused throughout the community. After its discussion with faculty, the team noted that “... diversity among faculty is not consistent with the diversity of CSU-East Bay’s student population. Further the team notes a lack of formal policies and
organizational capacity, focusing on the recruitment and retention of an ethnically diverse faculty.” (p. 13)

Though the University’s report indicates that policies are in place to attract diverse faculty, it also notes it has not investigated best practices. (Capacity and Preparatory Review Report, p. 33) Overall, the University’s success in diversity hiring places the University ahead of CSU averages (p. 8), but does not yet suggest that the University has made diversity recruitment a hallmark.

Similarly, the University has paid attention to multiculturalism in its lower division general education program, and reports that students in learning communities learn significantly from those of different ethnic backgrounds. (Capacity and Preparatory Review Report, p 13) However, the fact the students are learning from each other, more than is reported for a national comparison group, is short of a validation of the program in regard to this goal. Only two of the learning communities currently focus on diversity in their curricula. (p. 14)

The University reports that it is encouraging additional sections to focus on diversity but its goal in this regard is not clear. The incorporation of multiculturalism in upper division general education is under discussion. The team noted, “Unfortunately, while described as an important learning outcome, the team was unable to discern how extensive multiculturalism is presently embedded throughout upper division courses.” (Team Report, p. 8)

The University did not designate multiculturalism as one of the areas for special attention in its educational effectiveness review. Nor did its application for system’s authority for its international MBA program defend the significance of this program. This is surprising because CSU EB in its mission statement claims to want to take leadership in integrating multiculturalism across the institution.

Taken together, these observations suggest that the University has yet to establish multiculturalism as a key value or cornerstone of the educational experience of CSU EB. It is hard to determine if the commitment to multiculturalism in the mission and values of the University made any difference or is expected to in the future. Thus, in regard to multiculturalism, while the University has responded to CFR 1.5 and articulated a commitment to the WASC Statement on Diversity, more needs to be done to demonstrate it as a reality throughout the institution. The University, in this light, needs to be attentive to the expectations of CFR 1.2, which requires that “educational objectives are clearly recognized throughout the institution.” Again, your presentation to the Commission suggests that the campus understands its challenges here and has begun to address them in earnest.

**C. Workload Issues.** The visiting team would encourage CSU East Bay to pursue the challenges listed under the heading, Faculty Learning Community, in the final chapter of its institutional report. (Capacity and Preparatory Review Report, p. 33) The team was concerned that a decline in the number of faculty had coincided with an increase in class size, governance responsibilities, and scholarly aspirations. The team also highlighted confusion in regard to tenure, promotion and tenure expectations. They recorded similar observations in regard to staff burden. (Team Report, pp 11-14)
As the institution itself notes, many of the current personnel processes and assignments are overdue for review and need to be aligned with current University goals. (Capacity and Preparatory Review Report, p. 33) In other words, the University would be well advised to engage CFR 3.3 fully, particularly in light of the fact that it has recently embraced a new statement of mission and values.

In addition to attention to the issue of expectations for faculty and staff, the team expressed concern that they were overworked and underappreciated. The team noted, for example, that there was no reference to faculty and staff in the new mission, values or vision statements. (Team Report, p. 11) It also encouraged that younger faculty particularly be given guidance to overcome their uncertainty regarding personnel decisions and the pursuit of research grants.

The length of the lists of concerns the team recorded on pages 12 and 13 of its report suggest that the institution needs to be more consciously supporting the development of its faculty and monitoring their working conditions. In addition to attention to CFR 3.3 mentioned about, the University should direct its attention to CFR 2.9, 3.2 and 3.4 in order to maintain the appropriate balance of faculty responsibilities and to recognize faculty when they achieve that balance.

D. Concord Campus. In its discussion of physical resources in response to CFR 3.5, the University report did not discuss the Concord Campus in detail. However, the visiting team commented that this campus “represents a valuable, but underutilized asset for CSU East Bay.” (p. 22) Later in its report, the team also stated that the Concord Campus “is truly a gem that needs attention and a bit of polish. The team believes many opportunities to ease the budget crises exist there.” (p. 26)

While these observations were made in passing and were based on a short exposure to the Concord facility, they should prompt a reevaluation of a resource that the campus can employ more effectively. However, since the topic was not investigated by the University in its analysis, the team could not take the point further. In designing the Educational Effectiveness Review, the Commission requests that the Concord campus be visited and issues regarding its functioning and quality be more fully reviewed.

II. The Educational Effectiveness Review at CSU EAST BAY

The visiting team offered a number of comments throughout its report regarding the preparation of California State University, East Bay for the Educational Effectiveness Review. In addition to supporting these observations, the Commission would focus on three recommendations.

First, the Commission endorses the request CSU EB has made in its response to the visiting team’s report that it reduce the number of topics on which it will focus during its Educational Effectiveness Review. Both the letter accepting the institutional proposal for the accreditation review (Letter to Carl J. Bellone, March 21, 2003) and the visiting team’s report (Team Report, p. 30) suggested a reduced focus.
However, the Commission requests that the institution reframe the fourth of the suggested topics, Planning, to document its strategic planning process in terms of the other three topics it suggested. The Commission urges CSU East Bay to highlight the links between assessment and planning and budget, the documentation of educational goals achieved, the role of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, and the structures that promote faculty success, specifically in regard to academic quality, student success, and campus climate. For example, the University could investigate how the program review process has been adapted to encompass these goals, to help gain the resources needed to pursue them, to obtain the appropriate data to analyze and document failures and successes, and to encourage faculty to give priority to best practices concerning such initiatives.

While the University is requested to respond to issues like planning arising from the Capacity Review in the Educational Effectiveness Report, it is critical that the focus on educational effectiveness at CSU East Bay not be deflected as issues of capacity continue to be explored.

Second, given the central place given "multiculturalism" in the mission and values of the University, and given the concern raised by the visiting team that this focus has yet to receive the attention it deserves throughout the University, the Commission urges that CSU East Bay emphasize multiculturalism in its analysis of all three educational themes: academic quality, student success, and campus climate. How, in fact, does multiculturalism influence the way each goal is defined and measured and, having analyzed such measurements, what challenges remain for the campus?

Third, the Commission expects that the process by which the Educational Effectiveness Review is continued will stimulate the deep engagement of the campus community around questions of student learning. This is an opportunity for CSU East Bay to strengthen its lines of communication and coordination, to move from pockets of enthusiasm to campus-wide engagement. Therefore, CSU East Bay's Educational Effectiveness report should relate the 12 topics that were part of the original proposal to the four that it urges become the focus of the Educational Effectiveness Review and provide a description of the role played by the original Campus Outcome Teams in this new format. That is, the report needs to describe how a focus reduced to four goals was used to rekindle the commitment of campus groups and to stimulate participation toward levels that equal or exceed those already observed. In this regard, it will be important for the University dialogue to review levels of student learning in relation to University and program learning goals, to assure that the faculty take responsibility for student learning achievement, that they are appropriately supported to engage in assessment, and that graduates consistently achieve the levels stated by faculty standards. (CFR 2.2, 2.4, and 2.6)

In summary, the Commission encourages CSU East Bay to use the opportunity of the Educational Effectiveness Review to examine further how the campus can become engaged in the implementation of strategic plans focused on academic quality, student success, and campus climate. In conducting this review, the University should be especially attentive to those concerns that the visiting team has already identified, namely the commitment of leadership, the lines of communication and coordination, the analysis of data, multiculturalism, and workload issues.
III. Systems Review, International MBA programs

The Commission appreciates the detailed information provided by CSU EB and the team report in regard to systems authority for overseas MBA programs. It was impressed by the success of the overseas MBA programs currently operating. The Commission shares the team’s concern, however, in regard to the capacity of current faculty to staff existing and future overseas ventures (CFR 3.2 and 3.3) and still to maintain commitments at the main campus, given the current recruitment, reward, and workload structures.

Therefore, the Commission will extend systems authority to the University for site-based, off-campus programs offering the MBA where less than half of the program is delivered by technology-mediated or on-line modalities for a period of two years or until completion of the University’s Educational Effectiveness Review. For any new programs started during this period, each expedited report to WASC should include a detailed plan in regard to faculty staffing and workload at the new site, and the impact of the new site on faculty workload and at the Hayward and Concord campuses, and the other MBA sites.

For the Commission to consider a renewal of systems authority, the University should address the following issues as part of its Educational Effectiveness Report, or as an addendum.

1. How CSU EB will maintain a sufficient number of full-time tenure track faculty in all these programs, given competing obligations.

2. The linkage of these international programs to the new mission and values recently adopted by CSU EB.

3. The integration of the program and its internal planning and budgeting to the planning and budgeting of the School of Business and the University.

4. How the program is aligned with the program review and learning assessment processes in place in the School of Business and at the University.

The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Capacity and Preparatory Review Report and continue the accreditation of California State University, East Bay.

2. Reschedule the Educational Effectiveness Review to CSU EB to spring 2007 to allow more time to address these issues and extend the site visit by an additional day for a total of four days.

3. Request that the institution incorporate its response to the issues raised in this action letter and the major recommendations of the Capacity team in the CSU EB Educational
Effectiveness Report, in particular those issues related to the implementation of strategic plans. This may be done by referencing where these responses are in the Table of Contents or in an addendum to the Report.

4. Provide Systems Authority for overseas MBA programs for a period of two years or until the completion of the Educational Effectiveness Review, with the understanding that the University will provide the required reporting related to the opening of any new site.

The Commission hopes that this expanded letter and the extended time for the Educational Effectiveness Review provide the requested guidance and support for the University to use the accrediting process for institutional reflection, analysis and improvement. The Commission was encouraged by the commitment to change implicit in your presentation and looks forward to evidence of your success.

In accordance with Commission policy, we request that you send a copy of this letter to Chancellor Charles Reed. Please contact me if you have any questions or comments about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,

Ralph A. Wolff
Executive Director

Cc: John D. Welty
    Carl Bellone
    Members of the team
    Robert Benedetti