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**PRESIDENT**  
Mary Ellen Petrisko

July 15, 2015

Dr. Mohammed Qayoumi  
President  
San Jose State University  
One Washington Square  
San Jose, CA 95912

Dear President Qayoumi:

At its meeting June 17-19, 2015, the Commission considered the report of the review team that conducted the Accreditation Visit (AV) to San Jose State University (SJSU) April 13-16, 2015. Commission members reviewed the institutional report prepared by SJSU prior to the Offsite Review (OSR), any supplemental materials requested by the team following the OSR, and the institution's May 29, 2015, response to the visiting team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you, Andrew Feinstein, Provost, and Dennis Jaehne, Associate Vice Provost/Accreditation Liaison Officer. Your comments were helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations.

This reaffirmation review was conducted in keeping with the *2013 Handbook of Accreditation*, which requires institutions to address several components in their institutional reports. The team commended SJSU for "outstanding work in preparation for the WSCUC visit" with special appreciation for attention to detail by the staff. Because SJSU's self-study began soon after the new 2013 process was approved, the university became pioneers in addressing new components such as the meaning, quality, and integrity of degrees and the assessment of core competencies. The Commission appreciates the seriousness with which the university engaged with the new components, providing a basis for further growth in upcoming years.

The Commission supports all of the commendations found in the team report but wishes to place special attention on the following:

**Mid-Level Leadership and Staff.** Over the last decade, SJSU has experienced numerous personnel changes in the offices of the president, provost, vice presidents, and deans. Carrying on in the midst of these changes has been a group of mid-level leadership and staff who have persisted in developing and implementing many initiatives to ensure continuous improvement, including the new emphases of the 2013 process for reaffirmation of accreditation.

The Commission expresses appreciation for the dedication of this core group of SJSU employees who have continued to keep their focus on helping students receive a high-quality education.

**Financial.** The Commission commends SJSU for the strong management of its finances during a time of major financial challenges for all public universities in the state. The team report noted that the leadership team has been “both responsive and responsible” in this new environment by eliminating a \$12 million operating budget deficit and even providing a modest surplus for important investments through plans to expand international enrollment and aggressive fundraising plans for philanthropic and research funding. As the team concluded, “The structural budget deficit has been eliminated. Fund balances are positive, and financial ratios are healthy.” The infusion of funds back into Academic Affairs will also enable further recovery from the recession and state budget cuts. SJSU has also experimented with finding new ways to deliver education in a more cost effective way through piloting Udacity and EdX models. While the decision-making process in undertaking these pilots may have raised concerns and the results been less than expected, the Commission acknowledges, along with the team, the university’s willingness to explore new ways of program delivery given the difficult financial environment for students and the university.

**Core Competencies.** As the team noted, SJSU, as one of the first universities to address this newly required component of the WSCUC accreditation process, presented a “detailed and organized approach to describing assessment of the five core competencies” with a special focus on information literacy and writing. The work on the writing competency was especially substantial, as demonstrated by the university’s decision to hire two tenure-track faculty as writing specialists. The Commission commends SJSU for its early work on addressing this new requirement and encourages continued progress on all five core competencies.

The Commission endorses the findings and recommendations of the team and wishes to emphasize the following areas for continued attention and development:

**Leadership, Organizational Climate, and Shared Governance.** The Commission notes with grave concern the high turnover of top administration since the last review in 2007, with several presidents, provosts, vice presidents, and deans leaving in this short time period. The impact of so many transitions in such a short time period is a factor in many areas of concern in the team’s report. While these personnel changes were happening, the current president moved quickly to develop a strategic plan, experiment with new methods of delivering education, and invest in information technology infrastructure. The president’s actions led to requests for the Chancellor of the CSU system to become involved in assessing the impact of what was perceived as a lack of shared governance. As the team noted, these actions are indicators “of a lack of trust between faculty and administration that needs to be addressed and the need for transparency on both sides.” The lack of ongoing stable leadership and issues of shared governance have made it difficult for SJSU to develop an organizational climate focused on a commonly shared mission and cohesive community. Even students expressed

concern about their ability to connect with key student service leaders due to the high turnover. The Commission strongly endorses the team’s recommendation that SJSU “continue steps toward stabilization of leadership at cabinet level. As part of this effort, maintain progress toward clarification and improvement in processes of shared governance between President, cabinet, and senate; and address issues of siloed decision-making across divisions of the university.” One of the results of this work should be demonstration of another team recommendation supported by the Commission: that time be given “in improving and refining the strategic plan so that the entire campus owns the plan.” The Special Visit required below will focus on steps that have been taken to address these issues and the progress that has been made in improving organizational climate. (CFRs 3.6, 3.7, 3.10, and 4.6)

**Campus Climate.** SJSU is an ethnically diverse campus. Significant growth in in Hispanic enrollment (now over 25% of the student population) qualifies the university for Hispanic-Serving Institution designation. Despite some improvements in retention and graduation rates, a major gap in retention and graduation remains between underrepresented and majority populations. A major incident of racial bullying two years ago pointed to underlying issues that had been beneath the surface for many years and a campus climate that may be seen as linked to the lesser success of underrepresented student populations. Accordingly, the team expressed its concern “that campus climate is still problematic, and an area that deserves continued priority attention by the university.” The Commission supports the team recommendation that the university place a priority on institutionalizing the successful pilot programs that resulted from task forces focused on African American and Chicano Latinos. Further, the Commission supports the team’s recommendation that a “student-centered approach to assess campus climate both qualitatively and quantitatively in a more systematic manner” be implemented by wider sharing of NSSE survey findings. The Special Visit will focus on the success of these and other possible efforts developed by the university to improve campus climate. Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the team report and reaffirm the accreditation for seven years
2. Schedule the Offsite Review for fall 2021
3. Schedule the Accreditation Visit for spring 2022
4. Schedule the Mid-Cycle Review for spring 2019
5. Require a Special Visit in spring 2017 to monitor progress with respect to recommendations made in this letter on: 1) leadership, organizational climate, and shared governance; and 2) campus climate.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that San Jose State University has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments to Student Learning and Success, Quality and Improvement, and Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Accountability. San Jose State University has successfully completed the multi-stage review conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the

time of the next review, the institution is expected to maintain its compliance with WSCUC standards and uphold its commitment to continuous quality improvement.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to Timothy White, Chancellor of the California State University system. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the SJSU web site and widely disseminated throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement and to support the institution's response to the specific issues identified in these documents. The team report and the Commission's action letter will also be posted on the WSCUC website. If the institution wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WSCUC will post a link to that response.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that SJSU undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WSCUC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while contributing to public accountability, and we thank you for your continued participation in this process. Please contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Mary Ellen Petrisko  
President and Executive Director

MEP/ro

Cc: William Ladusaw, Commission Chair  
Dennis Jaehne, ALO  
Timothy White, Chancellor, California State University System  
Members of the reaffirmation team  
Richard Osborn, Vice President, Staff Liaison