OFFSITE REVIEW (OSR) SUMMARY OF LINES OF INQUIRY GUIDE

Directions: This form is to be completed by the team at the conclusion of its daylong Offsite Review of the institutional report and supporting materials. The form will be sent to the institution within one week by the WSCUC liaison, and a response to section IV will be sent back from the institution eight weeks in advance of the Accreditation Visit. This form can be in a bulleted list, outline or narrative format. Please do not delete this first page, i.e., this cover page. Instead complete information as requested and submit it with the Lines of Inquiry.

OFFSITE REVIEW (OSR)

Institution under Review: University of California, Merced
Date of Offsite Review: _October 2-3, 2017
Team Chair: President Michael Drake

 The Offsite Review team recommends the following actions be taken:

__X_ Proceed with the Accreditation Visit scheduled in: February 26-March 1, 2018
___ Reschedule the Accreditation Visit to: _____

The reason(s) the Team recommends rescheduling the visit is/are:
_____

_____

Due date for institutional response to Section IV (specify exact date):

December 19, 2017

_____

I. Overview of the lines of inquiry. Please include the following language in this section:

This document identifies four primary lines of inquiry for the Accreditation Visit (AV) that are derived from the institution's report. In addition, this document includes questions or issues the team discussed during the Offsite Review (OSR) that may be pursued during the visit. The team does not expect or invite a written response to these questions before the Accreditation Visit. The only written materials that the team expects from the institution before the visit are those listed in Section IV: "The team requests that the institution supply the following additional documents and information before the Accreditation Visit."

II. Commendations. The team commends UC Merced for:

a. Putting together a comprehensive, well-organized and highly informative report that describes the unique nature of the student body and documents the university's commitment to instructional learning and improvement.
b. Responding thoughtfully to each area of concern raised during previous reviews.
c. Instituting committees, processes, and mechanisms that facilitate data collection, and ensuring that 100% of the UCM programs have developed and published program learning outcomes that are accessible to students, faculty staff and others.
d. Placing a high priority on student learning and creating a transparent and easily accessible Assessment Website.
e. Developing a comprehensive system to review academic programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and assessing administrative and support operations.
f. Actively involving faculty in the decision-making process and ensuring a robust system of shared governance.
g. Embarking on an ambitious growth plan, both in terms of physical space and intellectual footprint, that is an essential step in accomplishing the goal of becoming a major research university.
h. Developing programs and services to address the needs of students from underserved populations in California. Noteworthy is that the campus has continued to increase the number of enrolled students while maintaining the same graduation/retention rates for both graduate and undergraduate students and that students are succeeding at approximately the same rate across all racial and ethnic groups.
i. Building programs that meet students' needs (e.g., food insecurity) and that assure success of future students.

III. Lines of inquiry. The team has identified the following lines of inquiry for the Accreditation Visit:

a. **Campus character and identity:** UC Merced rightfully aspires to gradually move toward academic parity with the other UC campuses and to elevate itself to the highest echelons of public research universities. When on campus, the team will explore the following questions:

   i. In what ways does Merced aspire to be different and, perhaps, unique, in comparison to other UC campuses and other peers in the long term?
   ii. How does the strategic academic plan for growth reflect such a unique vision?
   iii. How would a unique campus identity be promoted and developed within a UC system that has historically gravitated toward homogeneity?

b. **Student success:**

   i. As measured by student retention and graduation rates:
      1. What are UCM's goals for retention and graduation rates of all students? Of low-income and minority students?
      2. What are UCM's plans to increase the retention and graduation rates of all students? Of low-income and minority students?
      3. What plans have been developed to address the gender gap?

   ii. The report identifies financial barriers for students. Given the need for financial aid for a high percentage of enrolled students, how does the campus use or plan to use the financial resources provided to students as a means to address the retention/graduation rate issue?

   iii. UCM has a goal of enrolling 10,000 students.
      1. What are the targets for undergraduate transfer students, undergraduate first time freshmen, and graduate students?
      2. What role, if any, will summer session play in improving retention and graduation rates and increasing enrollment?
      3. What role, if any, will online or distance education play in reaching the goal of 10,000 students?
      4. What will be the relative efforts of increasing retention rates versus enrolling new students?

   iv. The report describes groups and committees charged with improving campus services and changing campus policies/procedures to increase student success.
      1. What are some examples of new programs (planned or implemented) or changes in policies or procedures (planned or implemented) that that are the result of group or committee work and suggestions ?
      2. What is the status of the development of the predictive model focused on enrollment and student success?
      3. What is an example of a successful collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs?

4. What professional development activities are available to faculty to help them improve their courses and respond to the changing needs of a diverse student body?

v. UCM has a well-developed student grievance procedure. What is the average time from filing a grievance to closing the case?

c. **Program assessment, data analysis and impact on policy.** UC Merced has built a robust framework in support of quality assurance through program review, assessment, and data driven change. When on campus, the team will explore the following questions:

i. What additional examples illustrate how program reviews and assessment outcomes have guided program and policy changes?
ii. Of all the program and performance data that are collected, how does the university determine which are of greatest value?
iii. The report indicates a desire to make assessment data more accessible and of value to decision-makers, and UCM has introduced a pilot program called: "The Guide for Program Stewardship."
1. While it has only been tested for a year, has the pilot gone well?
2. Is there evidence that the program will help UCM achieve some efficiencies in assessment and quality assurance processes?
iv. It appears that faculty who are members of the Faculty Senate are engaged in several assessment and continuous program improvement initiatives. Are non-ladder faculty similarly engaged?

d. **Financial success and sustainability:** UCM has creatively addressed campus needs and several funding challenges it has faced since its founding. The 2020 Project is quite groundbreaking, the campus has a funding MOU with UCOP providing much need funding stability, and it is actively engaged in long-term financial planning. During the campus visit, the review team wants to explore the following:

i. Given the importance of the 2020 Project to the campus, the team hopes to discuss the current status of the project, including the related financial plan, and assessment of risks, the potential impact on the affordability of student housing and a discussion of cost containment controls built into the 2020 Project contracts to ensure that housing is affordable to UCM students. How does this impact the campus's debt capacity as envisioned and if some of the private partners should pullout of the collaboration?
ii. How does UCM ensure that "… strategic resource decision making is connected to its teaching, research and public service mission?"
iii. Auxiliary net revenues in the out years of the UCM model are increasing at a very high rate and are what is generating the positive margin. What

are the underlying assumptions that allow for the generation of the positive margin?

  iv. Student Enrollments and Fees are also increasing in the UCM Model. Are there any contingency plans if enrollments or fee increases do not materialize?

  v. The UCM financial model shows significant growth in research, and as research generally requires support from other campus resources, how is the cost of this expansion accounted for in the UCM Model?

  vi. UCM is very reliant on State funding, are there plans to diversify its portfolio? Are there any contingency plans for a reduction in State support?

  vii. UCM is in the process of developing a new incentive based budget model.

    1. Why is the campus exploring a new budget model and what are its overarching goals?
    2. What incentives is the campus exploring, what is the process for developing the new model, who is participating in the model development process, and what is the time-line?

IV. <u>Request for additional documents and information</u>. The only written documents and information the team expects before the visit are listed in this section. The team does not expect or invite a written response to any of the questions posed or issues raised in other sections of this form. The team requests that the institution supply the following additional documents and information, if available, before the Accreditation Visit:

 a. Information, if available, about why students enroll at UC Merced and why students leave the campus prior to graduation.
 b. Information, if available, regarding the gender gap for graduation rates.
 c. Information, if available, regarding the impact of a UC Merced degree on graduates (e.g., surveys of graduates, employers, etc.).
 d. Results, if available, of the First Year Cross-Campus Working Group.
 e. Information, if available, on the predictive model for student success.
 f. Information, if available, on faculty development activities to promote student success.
 g. Information, if available, on the status of the "Guide for Program Stewardship."

V. <u>Individuals and groups to meet during the visit</u>. The team requests that the following groups and individuals holding the specified positions be included on the schedule for the Accreditation Visit. In developing the schedule for the visit, the team may identify additional individuals or groups with whom they wish to speak.

 a. Chancellor
 b. Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost
 c. Vice Chancellors
 d. Vice Provosts

e. Senior leadership
f. Senate Chair and senate leadership
g. WSCUC Steering Committee
h. Vice Chancellor for Planning and Budget and appropriate budget/finance capital finance staff.
i. Capital Planning Director and other appropriate planning staff
j. Department chairs (who have undergone program reviews)
k. PROC, CWGA, Committee for the Review of Learning Outcomes
l. Deans
m. Open meeting with faculty (ladder and non ladder faculty)
n. Open meeting with staff
o. Student government leadership (undergraduate and graduate)
p. Open meeting with students
q. Open meeting with underrepresented minority students
r. Instructional Technology leadership and staff
s. Institutional research staff
t. Academic support and student services staff
u. Faculty development staff