

July 20, 2018

Dr. Dorothy Leland  
Chancellor  
University of California at Merced  
5200 North Lake Road  
Merced, CA 95343

Dear Chancellor Leland:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning the University of California at Merced (UC Merced) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting June 27-29, 2018. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Accreditation Visit to UC Merced February 26-March 1, 2018. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by UC Merced prior to the Offsite Review (OSR) and the supplemental materials requested by the team after the OSR. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Interim Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Gregg Camfield, Professor Nate Monroe (Chair of the Reaffirmation Steering Committee), and Executive Director Laura Martin (Accreditation Liaison Officer). Your comments were very helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations. The date of this action constitutes the effective date of the institution's new status with WSCUC.

### **Actions**

1. Receive the Accreditation Visit team report
2. Reaffirm accreditation for a period of ten years
3. Schedule the next reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in fall 2027 and the Accreditation Visit in spring 2028
4. Schedule the Mid-Cycle Review to begin May 1, 2023
5. Schedule an Interim Report to be submitted by November 1, 2021 that includes:
  - a. A self-reflective review of the outcomes of the 2020 Project
  - b. A description of the mechanisms established for undergraduate students to access appropriate tutoring services
  - c. A copy of the next strategic plan for UC Merced
  - d. An update on the results of the fiscal conversations between UC Merced and the UC Office of the President, including any successor MOUs, with an eye to how these affect the growth plans and fiscal sustainability of the campus

### **Commendations**

The Commission commends UC Merced for:

1. The significant commitment and dedication of its teaching faculty, administrators, and staff to the success of its diverse student body, which includes a large number of low-income and first-generation students, as evidenced by much higher than predicted retention and graduation rates;
2. New and innovative academic support and student services that address the needs of a growing, diverse student body;
3. Its all-hands approach to providing opportunities to ensure student success despite less access to auxiliary funding sources that are typically available to many larger or mature institutions;
4. The high priority placed on student learning and for fostering a vibrant assessment culture including a transparent and easily accessible assessment website;
5. A comprehensive system of program review that includes academic units and administrative and support operations;
6. An ambitious growth plan that encompasses the physical space and intellectual footprint necessary to become a major research university;
7. Effective communication of the 2020 Project in a way that has generated enthusiasm and engagement of campus stakeholders;
8. The involvement of Academic Senate faculty in the decision-making process and ensuring a robust system of shared governance, particularly in the last three-four years; and
9. Committees, processes, and mechanisms that facilitate data collection and continuous improvement.

## **Recommendations**

The Commission requires the institution to respond to the following issues in the next institutional report for reaffirmation:

1. Create a comprehensive data driven retention and graduation plan with timelines, goals, and periodic assessments to help the campus focus current and future academic support and student services. (CFR 2.10)
2. Improve and simplify mechanisms for undergraduate students to easily access appropriate tutoring services. (CFR 2.13) Describe progress in addressing this issue in the Interim Report.
3. Establish a mechanism through which the work of the Academic Policy Study Group related to undergraduate student success is shared periodically with the chancellor and the provost so that appropriate changes to improve student success can be implemented. (CFRs 2.10, 3.7)
4. Implement a strategy for more active communication among senior leadership, faculty, staff, and students on issues of broad campus importance. (CFRs 4.6, 3.5)
5. Develop a strategic plan beyond 2020. (CFR 4.6) Describe progress in addressing this issue in the Interim Report.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that UC Merced has addressed the three Core Commitments and has successfully completed the two-stage institutional review process conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation.

Between this action and the time of the next review for reaffirmation, the institution is encouraged to continue its progress, particularly with respect to student learning and success.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of the Board of Regents in one week. A copy of this letter will also be sent to the president of the University of California. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the UC Merced website and widely distributed 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 on the WSCUC website.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that the University of California at Merced 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 support of this process. Please contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Jamienne S. Studley  
President

JSS/ bgd

Cc: Reed Dasenbrock, Commission Chair  
Laura Martin, ALO  
George Kieffer, Board Chair  
Janet Napolitano, President  
Members of the Accreditation Visit team  
Barbara Gross Davis, Vice President