



May 22, 2003

MAY 20 2003

Carol Tomlinson-Keasey
Chancellor
University of California, Merced
P.O. Box 2039
Merced, CA 95344

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Dear Chancellor Tomlinson-Keasey:

At its meeting of April 4, 2003, a Panel of the Eligibility Review Committee reviewed the application for Eligibility received from the University of California, Merced. The founding of the tenth campus of the University of California is a momentous event for higher education in the state. The Commission and this peer review Panel are pleased to engage in important questions with you regarding the planning and development of the Merced campus. The Panel appreciated the telephone conversation with you and your colleagues to deepen its understanding of the campus' progress and growth.

On behalf of the Panel, and as communicated by email on April 4, 2003, I am pleased to inform you that UC Merced is granted Eligibility for a period of three years. The Panel commends the institution for its commitment to educating future students, especially amidst pressing UC enrollments and challenging economic times. Given the context in which Merced is establishing itself, the Panel was particularly impressed with the clear and cogent Eligibility presentation.

The Panel encourages the institution to pay particular attention to the following areas as it begins the self-study process toward the Candidacy Review:

Authority. The application provides a clear explanation of the authority of the University of California and its campuses since 1868, and more recently, the authority extended by The Regents of the University of California in 1997 and 1998 to establish the Merced campus and seek additional funding. The California Postsecondary Education Commission approved UC Merced in 1999.

Integrity. The Panel understands that all UC campuses accomplish institutional integrity by adhering to the University's single mission to serve society as a center of higher education including undergraduate, graduate and professional education, research, and other kinds of public service. As Merced develops its own unique culture through academic programming and day-to-day activities of faculty, students, and administration, the institution is encouraged to communicate its interpretation of the University's broad mission into more specific campus goals and priorities on which to base its future evaluation of achievement and educational effectiveness.

Governing Board. The UC Board of Regents serves as the governing board for UC Merced as a campus of the University of California. The application provided ample web links for comprehensive information about membership, bylaws, and policies. It included a signed certification letter from the UC Regents' Secretary dated October 14, 2002 stipulating that the board is in compliance with Eligibility criteria 4 and 23.

CEO and Administrative Capacity. CEO and administrative capacity was clearly demonstrated through extensive biographical information, organizational charts, and certification of the responsibilities of the CEO. The Panel appreciated learning that the campus is poised to fill the position of the Vice Chancellor for Research, completing the senior cabinet. The Panel encourages the administration to look to the office of institutional research for leadership in developing and establishing a culture of evidence and assessment. The need for developing an effective retention tracking system was also discussed, and the Panel agrees that this should be a high priority for the campus in supporting institutional goals for student graduation and success.

Operational Status. The student enrollment projections, 2004 through 2028, indicate that UC Merced will be operational with students actively pursuing degree programs. The Panel appreciated the student enrollment table extracted from the UC Merced long range development plan, estimating planned growth in both undergraduate and graduate student enrollments starting with an 2004 enrollment of 1,000 through to full development of 25,000 in 2028. The Panel also appreciated clarification regarding the teaching of summer courses at off-campus centers in partnership with UC Davis. It understands that these course offerings are a service to the community delivered by many UC campuses. Should the summer programs convert to degree programs where 50 percent or more of the program is delivered off-campus or via a technology-assisted modality, the institution should seek prior approval through the substantive change process.

Degrees, Educational Programs, and Objectives. The Panel understands that the campus plans to initiate the following degree programs in the first five years: Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Master of Arts, Master of Science, Master of Business Administration, and Doctor of Philosophy. The application provided additional information about plans to implement particular degree programs in staged implementation in 2004 and 2005.

The Panel requested clarification on the timeframe for faculty hires in time for the Fall 2004 term, and understands that the campus' goal is to have sixty tenure track faculty on board and approximately 16 lecturers. The Academic Senate is expected to provide the oversight for appropriate balance between undergraduate and graduate degree programs, in consultation with an emerging graduate study structure. The Panel acknowledges the good practice of developing *graduate groups* for individual student support.

The Panel was encouraged that the campus is committed to the development of student learning outcomes, however, it expresses a concern that these outcomes be clear and explicit as the institution prepares to demonstrate during the Candidacy Review that it meets at a minimum level the Standards of Accreditation and Criteria for Review. That review will evaluate to what extent expectations for learning and student attainment have been developed.

Academic Credit and Transfer. The application provided sufficient assurance regarding institutional policies on transfer and award of credit.

General Education. The Panel was not clear about the institution's vision for general education, and how the structure of the program would be defined in the context of Merced's campus-based college system for residential and non-residential students. There was no evidence that a decision has been made about whether UC Merced will develop a traditional, distribution model of general education or an interdisciplinary model. It is important that this basic curricular decision be made expeditiously, so the first faculty can begin planning the structure of the general education program. The Panel encourages the campus to consider an interdisciplinary approach that will draw from faculty across the institution during the early years of campus development, particularly given that a full Academic Senate structure will be established in the coming year.

In light of current activities to recruit faculty, there was a concern that faculty designers for the program are not yet in place. Further, decisions regarding who will teach general education courses are pending. The Panel urged that the teaching responsibility not be delegated to adjuncts, and that decisions about tenure-track faculty responsibility for teaching general education courses be made while faculty are being recruited. The Panel also appreciated learning that a faculty team will be engaged this summer on the issue of general education.

Faculty. UC Merced established in 1998 a surrogate faculty governance structure known as the Task Force on UC Merced, functioning as a special committee of both the Academic Council and the University wide Assembly of the Academic Senate, representing all campuses of the University. This body has been a critical advisory body, and its charge and responsibilities are clearly described in the application. The Panel understands that the Task Force will transform itself over the next six months into a campus Academic Senate upon the arrival of twenty new faculty this summer. Achieving critical mass faculty to deliver the educational programs and participate in governance is acknowledged as a significant implementation challenge.

Student Services and Administration. The campus' commitment to providing a full range of student services is commendable, and the early hire of a Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs has advanced progress and development. The Panel wondered how student services were to be delivered across the college system structure, and learned from the conversation that such services as career, health, administration, and counseling would be delivered across the colleges, but that advising and internship services would be available within individual colleges.

Information and Learning Resources. As stated in the application, "the UC Merced Library will open its doors in 2004 with complete access for Merced faculty and students to the combined collections of all of the University of California Libraries". The campus has committed itself to building a quality university research library. The Panel was less clear about the relationship of the library and other information services such as the office of the chief information officer (not yet hired). Specifically, planning for the campus intranet and progress in technology planning was not evident. As the campus prepares for the Candidacy Review, the Panel encourages these organizational structures and technology planning be guided by the Criteria for Review in the context of supporting student learning.

Financial Resources and Accountability. The Panel had a series of questions regarding the funding plan that will support and sustain the development and growth of the Merced campus. The campus is not yet funded in the statewide formula, but has been allocated a base budget of \$50 million for a campus of 5,000 students by 2010. The Panel was concerned that this amount was not sufficient, and appreciated your explanation that the institution is allowed to seek additional funds from the legislature for new faculty and operations. Campus planning has been pared down due to the state's budget crisis including the number of faculty and the number of majors. The Panel was encouraged, however, to learn that UC Merced still has strong support from the Governor.

At the time of the Candidacy Review, the institution will be expected to have a clear and feasible plan to meet the Standards and Criteria for Review by the time of Initial Accreditation. Re-alignment of strategic goals for planned growth with realistic fiscal resources will be critical.

Institutional Planning and Evaluation. The Panel appreciates how important the founding of UC Merced is in response to the University's access issue. Current long range planning projects in the year 2010 the campus will have 5,000 students, approximately 20 undergraduate majors, and approximately 10 graduate majors. The institution has demonstrated that it engages in basic planning, but will need to deepen its planning activities for program review, institutional research and improvement. Additionally, future plans to develop off-campus centers and/or distance-learning programs may need review under the substantive change policy.

Public Information. The application for eligibility provided sufficient evidence that information maintained by the University of California regarding its policies, procedures, fees, and regulations are publicly disclosed.

Relations with the Accrediting Commission. As described in Criteria 4, the application provided a formal statement that the governing board stipulates that the institution agrees to adhere to the Eligibility Criteria and is committed to abiding by the Standards of Accreditation.

With Eligibility status now granted to UC Merced, the institution is invited to submit a formal Application for Candidacy. Institutions are not required to write an Institutional Proposal for the Candidacy review; rather, the Institutional Presentation is required to follow the comprehensive model for both the Preparatory Review and the Educational Effectiveness Review Reports.

We encourage you to work with your WASC staff liaison in following the guidance provided in this letter, and in understanding the requirements and expectations of the Candidacy Review under the *2001 Handbook of Accreditation*. In addition to a thorough review of the Handbook, please also refer to the separate Commission publication *How to Become Accredited: Procedures manual on Eligibility, Candidacy, and Initial Accreditation*. Both publications are available on our website (www.wascweb.org) including two new appendices updating the Eligibility, Candidacy and Initial Accreditation policy.

We have tentatively scheduled the first stage of the Candidacy Review—the Preparatory Review—for Spring 2005, followed by the Educational Effectiveness Review one semester later, or, Fall 2005. The Commission would take action on the review at its February 2006 meeting.

I look forward to working with you and UC Merced colleagues as you prepare for the Candidacy Review. Please feel free to contact me regarding the action of the Eligibility Review Committee.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Bangert
Associate Director

Cc: Ralph A. Wolff
Roberta Weil, Accreditation Liaison Officer
Members of Eligibility Review Committee