



March 3, 2003

Stephen A. Privett, S.J.
President
University of San Francisco
2130 Fulton Street
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080

Dear President Privett:

At its meeting on February 20-21, 2003, the Commission considered the report of the evaluation team that visited the University of San Francisco on November 13-15, 2002. The Commission also had access to the report prepared by the institution in preparation for this Fifth-year Visit.

The Fifth-year Visit was requested by the Commission to focus on the University's progress in addressing several issues identified in the 1997 evaluation team report and highlighted in the Commission's March 9, 1998, letter to President Schlegel, including planning, assessment, development of the University as a learning community, and several issues about the College of Professional Studies. Since the last visit, the University has had to address a number of challenges and it has done so with commitment and vitality.

The University's current status is considerably different than in 1997. Since the last comprehensive review, there has been substantial change in administrative personnel at USF, including your own appointment as President. Significant organizational changes have also been implemented. Moreover, during the first year of your appointment, the University had a significant shortfall in revenue relative to anticipated expenditures. While addressing the financial concerns, initiatives were also carried out that will enhance the effectiveness of short- and long-range planning, and improve the management of the institution. The Commission commends the University for addressing a difficult financial situation in ways that will also yield long-range benefits for the institution.

A new Mission and Vision Statement, accompanied by a statement of core values and strategic initiatives, has been adopted since the last comprehensive review. Attention has been devoted to systematic and thoughtful planning and evaluation of institutional progress based on the analysis of evidence attained through regular assessment. These steps bode well for USF's continuing development.

985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100
Alameda, CA 94501
PHONE: 510.748.9001
FAX: 510.748.9797
E-MAIL: wascsr@wascsenior.org
INTERNET: www.wascweb.org

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The University of San Francisco's next comprehensive review will be under Standards of accreditation and review processes contained in the *2001 Handbook of Accreditation*. The new Standards, organized around the Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness, place higher expectations on generating and analyzing evidence gained through systematic assessment for purposes of guiding institutional planning and improvement, especially of student learning. The University has begun to develop the infrastructure and evidence called for in these new Standards, and more will need to be done to focus various constituencies of the University on student learning assessment and improvement. The Commission endorsed the recommendations of the evaluation team and highlighted the following areas: planning, assessment, learning community, and College of Professional Studies.

Planning. While recent initiatives have yielded significant progress toward developing a systematic planning process, it is understood that much work is yet to be done. Institutional benefits will continue to evolve as systematic long-range planning becomes more fully a part of the institution's culture. Such planning will need to involve goal setting and integrate academic, facilities, and financial planning into a comprehensive model for charting the University's future. Critical to this process will be systematic evaluation of institutional progress based on evidence gained through a solid program of assessment.

Assessment. While assessment in general is a key component of institutional planning as outlined above, there is a need to extend the assessment of student learning across the University, to embed it within the culture of the institution, and to integrate assessment results into program improvement and planning. This includes initiatives being undertaken within the concept of a "Learning Community" as they impact student learning. The faculty and administration have collective responsibility for improving student learning and academic achievement. This involves the setting of learning goals, systematic evaluation of student learning results, the use of these results for pedagogical and program improvement. The evaluation team found several instances where a good start has been made. There appears to be general recognition of the importance of these kinds of efforts. In addition, some resources have been dedicated to enhancing engagement by faculty, notably the establishment of the Office of Assessment and Teaching Resources. Further progress in working with and improving student learning will be a key focus of the next comprehensive review.

Learning Community. The visiting team commented positively on the progress made in addressing the concept of implementing the "Learning Community" that was a key component of the University's last planning process. While the definition, or concept, was found to still be vague to some, various initiatives in recent years have helped to develop a local understanding of the meaning and implications of the term. As further dialog and initiatives contribute to broader understanding, it will be important for the University to also continue to develop concomitant methodology and processes for assessing the effectiveness of various programs and their impact on student learning.

College of Professional Studies. The 1997 evaluation team raised several concerns about the College of Professional Studies and its off-campus programs: access to technology and learning resources, level of staff support, number of full-time faculty involved, integration of the School's faculty and students with mainstream student learning-oriented campus life, and General Education requirements for nontraditional students. The current evaluation team made a special effort to review these issues with the College and found that good work has been accomplished in addressing these areas and there have been substantial improvements. The evaluation team made special reference to the value of the Teaching Academy and its roles in improving the quality of instruction and in enhancing the integration of the School's faculty into the campus.

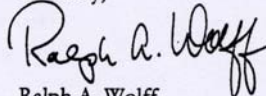
The Commission acted to:

1. Receive the report of the Fifth-year Visit team.
2. Schedule the Proposal for the two stage review to be due on May 1, 2005. Schedule the Preparatory Review in fall 2007, and the Educational Effectiveness Review in fall 2008.

The next comprehensive review of the institution will be under the *2001 Handbook of Accreditation*, which contains significant changes in standards and substantially different expectations for institutional presentations. The Commission urges the University to review the *Handbook* and the *Evidence Guide* to assess how institutional evidence can be developed and used prior to the next accreditation review.

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments regarding this letter and the Commission's action.

Sincerely,



Ralph A. Wolff
Executive Director

cc: James R. Appleton
Robert Niehoff, SJ
Members of the team
Fred H. Dorer

RW/brn