

Rationale for Recommendation

After reviewing the materials prepared and completing a two-day site visit, the Preparatory Review Team concludes that the University of California-Santa Cruz has done an outstanding job in addressing the Core Commitment to Capacity and meeting fully the Standards of Accreditation.

The team believes that the UCSC faculty and administration demonstrated an outstanding effort in preparing for the WASC Preparatory Review. The people, processes, organizations, and evidence gathered were impressive and made the task of the review committee quite straightforward. This effort was tightly linked to an ongoing strategic planning effort. Our team was very pleased with the institutional presentation, which demonstrated that the campus was involved in effective self-review and identification of key trends.

After a thorough examination of the evidence gathered, the team found no areas of significant concern under the preparatory review standards. Their effort has laid a solid foundation for the Educational Effectiveness Review next year. We recognize that this latter review will address challenging issues: 1) the growth and improvement of graduate programs, and 2) the enhancement of undergraduate academic engagement, with both topics focused on educational goals and the capacity to measure and assess learning outcomes. Yet we have every reason to be optimistic about the outcome of this next phase of the WASC review process.

The team agrees with the statement in the Preparatory Review Proposal that UCSC is at a critical point of its evolution. Its unusually strong commitment to high quality undergraduate education in the living-learning environment of residential colleges, coupled with numerous opportunities for student development through research projects, public service and international experiences within the environment of a research university engaged in graduate education and research of the highest caliber is unique among public universities. In fact, UCSC has long served as a role model for American higher education. Yet today, the financial realities and economic needs of the State of California, coupled with the changing nature of scholarship (e.g., the interdisciplinary character of new knowledge and the impact of digital technology), have caused UCSC to expand its graduate programs and introduce new professional degree programs (e.g., engineering and business administration) while enhancing still further the academic engagement of undergraduates.

The brief history of UCSC has been characterized by extraordinary innovation, driven both by the vision of its founders and its capacity to attract energetic, creative faculty, students, staff, and administrative leaders seeking such a pioneering spirit. This may, in fact, be the strongest asset of the university as it faces an increasingly uncertain future, since institutions characterized by innovation and flexibility, based upon enduring traditions and values, seem best able to transform challenge into opportunity during a period of rapid change. We believe that UCSC is remarkably well positioned not simply to adapt to this future with its fundamental values and character intact, but to shape its

further evolution into a leading research university with an extraordinary commitment to undergraduate education.

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