

April 7, 2014

Dr. Rollin C. Richmond
President
Humboldt State University
One Harpst Street
Arcata, CA 95521-8999

Dear President Richmond:

At its meeting during the Interim Report Committee retreat on November 15, 2013, a panel of the Interim Report Committee (IRC) considered the Interim Report submitted by Humboldt State University (HSU) on November 1, 2013. The panel and I would like to thank you, Noah Zerbe, Chair of the University Senate and Politics department; Edward Nuhfer, Director of Educational Effectiveness; Jacqueline Honda, Associate Vice President for Retention and Student Success and Director of Institutional Research; Joyce Lopes, Vice President of Administrative Affairs; Peg Blake, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs; Cindy Moyer, Professor of Music and Chair of the Integrated Curriculum committee and Academic Master Planning Subcommittee; Robert Snyder, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Bernadette Cheyne, faculty member in Theatre, Film, and Dance and former Faculty Trustee for the CSU for participating in a teleconference with the reviewers during the meeting and giving the reviewers an opportunity to discuss the report. The conversation was informative and helped the panelists better understand the university's challenges and progress since 2010.

The July 14, 2010 Commission action letter indicated that the November 2013 Interim Report should focus on: a) assessing student learning; b) making excellence inclusive; c) embracing institutional change and making critical choices; d) realigning resources and institutional structures; and, e) sustaining current effort.

The IRC panel found the 2013 Interim Report was professional, thorough, well-structured and focused on the requirements of the 2010 Commission action letter. The panel commended HSU for using a scorecard approach to communicate the university's planning, implementation, and progress, and for your transparency and candor, in the report and during the teleconference.

Assessment of student learning. The IRC panel commended HSU for instituting a comprehensive and coherent approach to the assessment of student learning and to program review. The new approach includes an investment in a full-time Director of Educational Effectiveness which should help assure that student learning is assessed systematically and universally and that assessment results will be used to make improvements. The panel found that new policies and procedures enhance the consistency of program learning outcomes and assessment methods across departments and include more direct measures of student learning, stipulations of the July 14, 2010 Commission action letter. The panel learned from their review that all HSU programs submit annual assessment reports and that there has been increased faculty participation in assessment across majors. HSU has a program review plan in place that will review all HSU programs every five years, reviews that will include an external review. The panel commended HSU for linking program review data with financial data which allows the university to consider changes "...as a part of its planning, new program development, and resource allocation." Finally, the IRC panel found extensive work done to rethink general education outcomes and develop a sound albeit ambitious general education assessment plan and timeline.

The overarching concern raised in the July Commission action letter remains, i.e. for HSU to move beyond design and implementation to the production of student learning outcomes results across the institution, at every level, that are regularly used to improve learning and teaching. HSU should provide substantial evidence of its efforts to “close the loop” in its institutional report for the next comprehensive review. (CFRs 1.2, 2.2-2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3, 4.4)

Student success/inclusive excellence. The IRC panel concluded that HSU is both enthusiastic about and committed to this goal. The panel commended HSU for the newly developed enrollment management plan with strategies articulated and desired outcomes included. The panel found that HSU has a fully staffed Office of Diversity and Inclusion providing a more structured approach to planning, resource allocation, and oversight of this initiative’s efforts. The panel found HSU’s strategy to engage faculty at the departmental level with assessment and student progress was effective. HSU improved student retention results since 2010 and used recent faculty hires to increase diversity; the university plans to incorporate student success results with program reviews to inform plans for improvement. The panel found a strong alignment between this goal and HSU’s gateway courses and the RAMP and Early Alert programs.

HSU should provide substantial evidence in its institutional report for the next comprehensive review that these programs and initiatives are producing meaningful and sustainable results and that assessment of student learning supports the success of students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. (CFRs 1.4, 2.7, 2.10, 2.13)

Campus culture. The IRC panel found a variety of evidence that HSU is taking the need for institutional change seriously. HSU reconstituted its shared governance structure and established a focused list of priorities that includes student success, enhancing revenue, and advancing the university’s vision. The university engaged in extensive consultation before launching initiatives or taking on issues. HSU created a number of committees and working groups to help make the critical choices articulated in the last Commission action letter, and improved efforts to meet standards of transparency. The panel particularly commended HSU for its achievements in environmental sustainability.

The panel does note that a number of key personnel are new to their positions and that several initiatives are in the planning or early adoption phases. They are concerned that the volume of committees and groups may prove to be difficult to coordinate. HSU should provide substantial evidence in its institutional report for the next comprehensive review of a positive campus culture that is producing results and sustaining momentum. The evidence should include the results and analysis of a campus-wide satisfaction survey that helps gauge perceptions of and experience with ongoing communication, mutual respect, collegiality and civil discourse. (CFRs 2.10, 4.3, 4.4)

Re-alignment of resources. The IRC panel commended the university for robust evidence of realigning resources and institutional structures. HSU has made a significant effort to prioritize its academic programs.

Next, HSU should include in its institutional report for the next comprehensive review an analysis of its prioritization efforts including the fit with the positive campus culture initiative and the basis for the various decisions. In addition, HSU should include the role of student learning outcomes assessment and program review in the prioritization efforts. Once again, evidence of “closing the loop” is needed.

HSU's effectiveness to sustain efforts to make change was addressed, in part, in the discussions of the previous four issues. However, it bears repeating that the university needs to provide evidence of the outcomes of its numerous activities and initiatives, showing their impact, and needs to show how results are being used to make improvements. The Commission described sustainability as critical "not only for learning and student success but for the university's financial viability and adaptability to new educational needs". The next comprehensive review team should use the evidence provided to make judgments about the sustainability of HSU's efforts over time. (CFRs 3.4, 3.7, 4.3, 4.6, 4.7)

After extensive discussion of the progress that Humboldt State University has made thus far, the panel acted to:

1. Receive the Interim Report.
2. Request that progress on the topics addressed in this letter be included in the institutional report as a part of the fall 2017 Offsite Review and spring 2018 Accreditation Visit.

The panel would like to affirm the hard work and important steps Humboldt State University has taken to address the issues raised by the Commission. I wish you and the university every success.

Sincerely,



Maureen A. Maloney
Vice President

cc: Jena Burges, Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO)
Members of the Interim Report Committee