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THE PRESIDENT

May 31, 2016

Dear members of the WASC Senior College and University Commission:

We would like to thank the WSCUC review team for their accreditation visit in March 2016. The campus community found their visit to be a productive opportunity to reflect on our progress and on the opportunities to further enhance and develop high-quality, effective educational programs. We view the team report, received in May 2016, to be an accurate and insightful analysis of our institution as we seek reaffirmation of accreditation.

While little time has passed since the receipt of this team report, we are pleased to provide an update on ongoing discussions and planning related to the report's major recommendations. Perhaps most notably, the university has hired Dr. Norah Shultz in the new position of Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs in Student Achievement. This position represents an elevation of the previous position of Dean of the Division of Undergraduate Studies and, in coordination with the President and Provost, AVP Shultz will be involved in the university's efforts to implement recommendations and advance student achievement on our campus. We look forward to welcoming AVP Shultz to campus in late June.

Regarding Recommendation 1, we agree on the need to re-examine our General Education program to ensure the curriculum is rigorous and relevant, the number of course options are manageable for students and the institution, and that the experience has clear value and meaning to our student body. We plan to explore best practices in General Education on other campuses of comparable scale and ranking, with an eye toward considering a thematic pathways approach, among other approaches. Given SDSU's strong commitment to shared governance and curriculum designed by the faculty, any recommendations and implementations would be considered by the University Senate and relevant Senate committees. We are currently working with incoming Senate Chair Marcie Bober-Michel to include this broad re-examination of General Education on the 2016-17 Senate agenda – a process that will likely involve referral to standing Senate Committees or a representative Task Force. The process will involve reviewing and potentially revising the charges of General Education-related committees, as these Senate General Education-related committees must be involved not only in approval of new curriculum but also in designing a meaningful process for assessing outcomes for student learning. In parallel with any structural changes and moving forward, we will

make a concerted effort through academic advising to publicize General Education options, including the value and relevance of the curriculum, to undergraduate students.

Regarding Recommendation 2, we agree that improved access to reliable data and shared analytical tools would enhance our student success efforts and effectiveness, particularly as they pertain to real-time advising, assessment of student learning and predictive analytics. In response to this recommendation, a group of senior administrators, led by the CIO, has been appointed by the Vice Presidents to assess the university's current state and availability of data, enterprise information systems, business practices and reporting capabilities. The group also will explore alternatives that could provide more consistent, robust, reliable, and readily available data. The group will provide its findings and recommendations to the Vice Presidents within six months and a proposed implementation plan shortly thereafter.

Regarding Recommendation 3, we believe that recruiting and retaining a high-quality, diverse body of faculty and staff in adequate numbers to support institutional needs is essential to student success at SDSU. Of note in relation to the issue of faculty and staff working conditions is that, after the review team's visit, the California Faculty Association and the California State University system came to an agreement on substantial salary increases for tenured/tenure track faculty and lecturers. This agreement also will result in salary increases for many staff members through parity clauses in their collective bargaining agreements. Relevant to Recommendation 3, the campus also recently implemented its Building on Inclusive Excellence hiring program, the first up-front commitment by this campus to allocate additional lines for new tenure-track faculty, identified through regular search processes, who demonstrate expertise, commitment and experience that aligns with our campus commitment to diversity. The BIE proposal was developed by our strategic plan working group on recruitment and retention of under-represented faculty as part of a suite of initiatives aimed to boost our under-represented faculty from 23 percent to 30 percent of incoming cohorts. The proposal has been endorsed by the Senate and will be implemented beginning with the 2016-17 faculty recruitment cycle.

Regarding Recommendation 4, we agree that robust educational programs require a high-quality, yet manageable, process of assessment. The process must be understood and applied consistently across campus and rooted in a clear context of best practices and explicit institutional expectations. In addition to the aforementioned plan to assess data availability and data analytics, we are reviewing

our current assessment process with the overall goal of streamlining it and making it more transparent, evidence-based and action-focused. These improvements may involve revisiting the utility and continuation of our current WEAVE software, centralizing organizational units responsible for institutional effectiveness and increasing campuswide capacity for assessment through professional development opportunities for staff and faculty.

We look forward to receiving the Commission's final decision on reaffirmation of our accreditation and to continuing to focus on the priorities identified in our "Building on Excellence" strategic plan.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elliot H", written in a cursive style.

Elliot Hirshman
President