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Ralph A. Wolff

March 6, 2012

Gary Dei Rossi  
Chief Executive Officer  
Teachers College of San Joaquin  
2857 Transworld Drive  
Stockton, CA 95206

Dear Dr. Dei Rossi:

At its meeting February 22-24, 2012, the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) Candidacy team that conducted the visit to Teachers College of San Joaquin (TCSJ) September 28-30, 2011. The Commission also had access to the Educational Effectiveness Review report prepared by the College prior to the visit, the institution's January 5, 2012 response to the visiting team report, and the documents relating to the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) Candidacy visit conducted in fall 2010. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the review with you and your colleagues, Dr. Catherine Kearney, dean of the college; Dr. Sylvia Turner, director of institution research; and Ms. Karyn Dexter, finance director. Your comments were helpful and informative to the Commission's deliberations.

TCSJ began the accreditation process in March 2009 and, as noted above, hosted a Capacity and Preparatory Review visit for Candidacy in October 2010. The Commission stated in its letter of March 7, 2011 that the College might be able to make sufficient progress by the fall 2011 EER visit to be considered for initial accreditation.

The institution's EER self-study and review focused on the four Standards of Accreditation. The team found the College's report to be thorough, candid, well documented, and responsive to past Commission recommendations. Offering a single degree, the Master of Education, TCSJ was found by the team to have stable leadership, a solid financial base, a sound educational offering, a cadre of highly dedicated faculty and students, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

The Commission's action letter of March 7, 2011 highlighted four major issues for special attention during the interval between the CPR and EER visits: assessment, program review and student achievement; strategic planning; appropriate board governance; and financial management and oversight.

TCSJ has made considerable progress in assessment, program review and student achievement. In the words of the team, the College is particularly "strong in areas of educational effectiveness," with established expectations for student learning, ongoing methods of assessment and an "outstanding" program review process that

“has provided a useful framework for systematic measurement of learning outcomes.” In addition, the Commission commends TCSJ for its high retention and graduation rates and the success of its students after graduation.

While TCSJ has developed an initial strategic plan, additional work is needed to prioritize goals and develop an action plan to achieve those goals.

In terms of board governance, the Commission asked TCSJ to create an independent governing board to meet the expectations in CFR 3.9, as previously the governance authority was vested in the Superintendent. TCSJ acted to designate the County Board of Education as the governing board for TCSJ with full legal and fiduciary responsibility for the College.

Because TCSJ operates within the San Joaquin County Office of Education, its financial accounts and records have not been maintained separately from the County Office accounts and the College has not had its own independent financial audit. When asked by the Commission to change this arrangement, TCSJ created separately identified financial accounts and is in the final phase of completing all accounting transactions (to be concluded by June 30, 2012).

During its time on campus, the team found much to commend. It was impressed by the successful launch of the College, with all attendant challenges and complexities, calling the achievement “remarkable.” The team also commended TCSJ for demonstrating a genuine commitment to the WASC process and for “fully embracing a system of continuous improvement.”

The Commission endorses the commendations and recommendations of the EER team and wishes to emphasize the following areas for further attention and development:

**Implementing the new governing board structure.** Under WASC Standards, an institution’s governing board is a policy-making body responsible for the quality, integrity and financial sustainability of the institution and for ensuring that the institution’s mission is being achieved. Because of the unique manner in which TCSJ was developed, it did not initially have an independent governing board that fit this description. The Commission appreciates TCSJ’s actions to come into conformity with this important WASC expectation, designating the existing San Joaquin County Board of Education as its governing board and setting forth appropriate responsibilities for that board in organizing documents. Because this is a new role for the Board of Education, the College is expected to familiarize board members with the expectations, roles and responsibilities of governing boards of colleges and universities. This includes having a meaningful role in the selection, evaluation and termination of the chief executive officer. It is also expected that mechanisms will be created for assessing how well the board performs its governance responsibilities, and that the results of this assessment will be used to enhance the board’s effectiveness. (CFRs 1.3, 3.8, 3.9 and related Guideline)

**Ensuring appropriate financial records, management and oversight.** The Commission asks that TCSJ complete the process of separating its financial accounts and records from the County Office of Education as quickly as possible. In addition, the College is expected to retain a qualified firm to conduct an independent of its finances. (CFRs 1.8, 3.5)

**Refining strategic planning and priorities.** As highlighted in the team report, strategic planning merits increased attention to help define the future direction of TCSJ and to align short-term and long-term financial, academic, and operational goals. The Commission supports the representative and collaborative process that has been used to date and asks that TCSJ incorporate in its plan the results from data analyses that can help inform key goals. The plan should include specific priorities, targets and milestones, a timeline, a consideration of resources needed to support implementation, and lines of responsibility. (CFRs 4.1-4.3)

**Increasing faculty diversity.** The College acknowledges that progress needs to be made in recruiting and retaining a faculty that more closely reflects the diversity of the student body and the general Stockton community. The Commission recognizes that TCSJ has a small faculty made up of expert-practitioners and that its pool of prospective faculty members is limited to those currently teaching or serving as administrators in school districts. Despite these challenges, the Commission urges continued attention to this area. (CFRs 1.5, 2.1, 2.10, 2.13, 3.2)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Grant initial accreditation to Teachers College of San Joaquin.
2. Schedule the next comprehensive review with the off-site review in fall 2016 and the visit tentatively scheduled for spring 2017.
3. Request a Special Visit in fall 2013 to review progress on the following issues cited in the EER report: (1) the operations and effectiveness of the board structure, (2) separate financial accounts systems and the independent audit, (3) strategic planning, and (4) faculty diversity.

Initial Accreditation is granted for five years. Accreditation status is not granted retroactively. Institutions granted the status of Accreditation must use the following statement if they wish to describe the status publicly:

(Name of institution) is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 985 Atlantic Avenue, #100, Alameda, CA 94501, 510.748.9001.

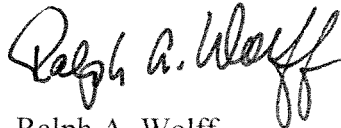
The phrase “fully accredited” is to be avoided, since no partial accreditation is possible. The accredited status of a program should not be misrepresented. The accreditation granted by WASC refers to the quality of the institution as a whole. Since institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program at the institution, statements like “this program is accredited” or “this degree is accredited” are incorrect and misleading.

Teachers College of San Joaquin is approved to offer the Master of Education degree. It has individual (“I”) degree-level approval, which means that any new degrees at any level must be approved through the WASC Substantive Change process. (See the WASC *Substantive Change Manual* for details.)

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of the College's governing board in one week. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be widely disseminated throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement, and to support the institution's response to the specific issues identified in them.

Finally, the Commission congratulates the College on this accomplishment and wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that the institution undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WASC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while assuring public accountability, and we are grateful for your continued support of our process. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Ralph A. Wolff  
President

RW/bgd

cc: Linda Johnsrud, Commission Chair  
Catherine Kearney, ALO  
Mark Thiel, Board Chair  
Members of the EER team  
Barbara Gross Davis, WASC