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March 19, 2009

Ms. Fran Ulmer
Chancellor
University of Alaska Anchorage
3211 Providence Drive, ADM 217
Anchorage, AK 99508

Dear Chancellor ~~Ulmer~~ ^{Fran}:

The purpose of this letter is two-fold. The first purpose is to express the Commission's appreciation to the University of Alaska Anchorage for its good faith participation in the Standards Revision and Implementation Pilot Project. The Commission has benefitted greatly from the University's contributions in working through the myriad of details required to translate the new conceptual accreditation model and oversight process into practice.

The second purpose of this letter is to inform you that at its March 10, 2009, meeting the Executive Committee of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, acting on behalf of the Board of Commissioners, accepted the Year One Report from the University of Alaska Anchorage. The seriousness and rigor in which the University approached the report is clearly evident in the product produced.

Commissioners were particularly impressed with the definition and clarity of the University's core themes, their purposes, and their relationships with its mission. The University's mission, the communities it serves, and its role within the University of Alaska System are clearly apparent in its plans and activities. The University's planning process is comprehensive and detailed, almost to the point of being overly complex.

Commissioners did find some areas that would benefit from additional attention. In particular, they noted the complexity of the University's goal-outcome-indicator structure due to the mixing of achievement indicators with supporting activities intended to achieve the identified outcomes in the *Goals, Outcomes and Indicators* sections of the core themes. For example, the apparent indicators of achievement in section 2.1 under *High Quality Programs* within Core Theme #1 (*Instruction*) (top of page 10) appear to be a set of processes and structures, rather than measures of achievements.

Overall, Commissioners found the report to be well done. It was substantive, well written, and consistent with the principles of revised Standard One and expectations for the Year One Report.

Commendations

1. The University is commended for its comprehensive planning process as reflected in its goals, outcomes, and indicators of achievement.
2. The University is commended for the identification and clarity of its core themes and the relationship of the core themes to its mission.

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3. The University is commended for its attention both to its identified outcomes as well as to the enabling processes, structures, and activities intended to foster achievement of those outcomes.

Recommendations

1. The University has developed an elaborate and comprehensive set of core theme outcomes and indicators of achievement. As identified on the top of page 7 of its Year One Report, the University's indicators represent a mixture of indicators of actual achievements (item 1) and enabling resources, structures, processes, and other activities linked to those achievements (items 2 and 3). The Commission recommends that the University simplify its goal-outcome-indicator structure to more clearly delineate and communicate its measures of achievements from its enabling processes, structures, and activities.
2. The Commission recommends that the University review its indicators for its core theme goals or intended outcomes to ensure they provide direct evidence of achievements.
3. Although not required in the Year One Report, the Commission recommends that the University develop and articulate benchmarks or acceptable levels of achievement for its indicators as it moves forward with its assessment activities. The Commission notes that identification of benchmarks or acceptable levels of achievement will assist both the University and the Board of Commissioners in evaluating the results of the University's assessment efforts when it reports its effectiveness in the Year Five Report scheduled for submission in spring 2010.

Finally, following the Executive Committee's review of the Year One Reports, a slight modification has been made to the requirements for Year One Reports. The requirement for an articulation of mission goals and indicators of achievement of mission goals has been replaced with a request for the institution to provide its definition of mission fulfillment and, within that definition, an interpretation of an acceptable threshold or extent of mission fulfillment. Those changes are reflected in Section 1 of the enclosed *Guidelines for the Preparation of Year One Reports* (revised March 11, 2009). The University is asked to incorporate these changes in Chapter One of its Year Three Report due September 1, 2009.

This change is based on the observation that institutional mission goals were found, in general, to be indiscernible from core themes. The intent of the original requirement was to use the mission goals and indicators of achievement to enhance an understanding of the institution's mission and its interpretation of mission fulfillment, since they collectively form the framework for the institution and Commissioners to determine in revised Standard Five the extent to which the mission is fulfilled. It was determined that the new Year One Report requirement provides a clearer communication of that intent and guide for an institutional response.

Once again, congratulations on the University's accomplishments as a Pilot Project institution. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Best wishes for a successful completion of the academic year.

Sincerely,

Sandra E. Elman
President

SEE:rb

cc: Mr. Thomas P. Miller, Assistant Provost ✓



Guidelines for the Preparation of Year One Reports

Revised March 11, 2009

Please submit ten (10) printed copies of the report, one electronic copy of the report, and one copy of the institution's catalog to the Commission office.

Structure and Contents

1. Title page to include:
 - a. Institution name
 - b. Title of Report
 - c. Date
2. Table of Contents
3. Introduction [One (1) page maximum]
4. Institutional Context [One (1) page maximum]
5. Preface
 - a. Brief Update on Institutional Changes Since Last Report
 - b. Address Topics Requested By the Commission
6. Chapter One – Standard One: Mission and Core Themes
 - Section I: Mission: [Three (3) pages maximum]
 - a. Mission Statement
 - b. Mission Core Themes
 - c. Definition of Fulfillment of Mission and, Within that Definition, Interpretation of an Acceptable Threshold or Extent of Mission Fulfillment.
 - d. Date and Manner of Most Recent Review of Mission and Core Themes
 - Section II: Core Themes
 - For each Core Theme: [Maximum of three (3) pages per theme]
 - a. Descriptive Title
 - b. Goals or Intended Outcomes for the Core Theme
 - c. Indicators of Achievement of the Core Theme's Goals or Intended Outcomes
 - d. Rationale as to Why the Indicators are Assessable and Meaningful Measures of Achievement of the Core Theme's Goals or Intended Outcomes
 - Section III: Chapter Summary [One (1) page maximum]

(Continued on reverse side)

Report Layout

1. Use letter size portrait orientation (8½" wide by 11" high) with 1" margins on all sides.
2. Use 11- or 12-point type face for the body of the report. Larger fonts may be used for major headings which should be in bold print face and double spaced from the text. Do not use script or italic as the primary font.
3. Number all pages (except Title page, Table of Contents, and Introduction).
4. Single space text in the body of the report.

Publication of Report

To conserve paper and minimize shipping costs, please adhere to the following:

Print Version

1. Use **WHITE** 20 pound paper for the report.
2. Other than the Title Page and Table of Contents page, print on **BOTH SIDES** of the paper.
3. Three-hole punch the report and appendices (if any).
4. Staple reports in the upper left corner. Do not bind or shrink-wrap reports!

Electronic Version

1. Provide the body of the report as a single Windows-compatible Adobe Acrobat file. If available, appendixes may also be sent as a single Adobe Acrobat file. ***Non-Acrobat files and multi-file reports may be returned.*** The file should be emailed to: reports@nwccu.org.

Please contact the Commission Office at 425/558-4224 if you have questions on these guidelines.