MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 3, 2012

TO: Division of Academic Affairs

FROM: Dr. James T. Strong
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Charge for WASC Special Visit 2014

The following is the charge to the Division of Academic Affairs relative to the WASC Commission Action Letter of March 7, 2012 requesting a Special Visit in 2014. A WASC Special Visit is focused on a few issues, is significantly different from a Capacity and Preparatory Review or an Educational Effectiveness review and does not warrant as complex a response structure on the part of the Institution. The WASC Special Visit of 2014 will also include a review of the Ed.D program. This review is separate and distinct from the charge in the WASC Commission Action Letter of March 7, 2012. Preparation for the Ed.D review will be handled by the College of Education under the leadership of Dean (Interim) Myhre and thus is not addressed in this charge memo. The combination of these two reviews is prompted by WASC to improve efficiency and reduce costs. My charge to the Division of Academic Affairs (in response to the WASC Commission Action Letter of March 7, 2012) is the result of consultative meetings with all relevant campus stakeholder groups (SEC, administration, staff, and students). This charge also builds on the work discussed in the CSU Stanislaus WASC Special Visit Report dated August 2011 and the WASC Special Visit Team Report dated November 26, 2011. The WASC Commission Action Letter of March 7, 2012 and the WASC Special Visit Team Report (November 2011) provide the specific focus and framework to prepare for the 2014 Special Visit. As with the 2011 Special Visit preparation, faculty and administration should use the 2014 Special Visit as a catalyst to make sustainable improvements to Academic Affairs and the University. My assumption is that the Special Visit will occur in the fall of 2014 and that the Special Visit Report will be due in summer 2014. This charge memo focuses on three major issues.

1. The organizational structure and processes for Academic Affairs’ preparation for the 2014 WASC Special Visit.
2. The specific charges from WASC and their meaning.

Special Visit Organizational Structure and Selection Process

The 2014 CSU Stanislaus WASC Special Visit Report (the Report) will be submitted by the president (on behalf of the University) to the WASC Commission, as is always the case with reports at this level. The president is the final reviewing authority, has final authority regarding the University’s acceptance of the Report from the Division of Academic Affairs, and will be informed by the recommendation of the Provost and Vice President of
Academic Affairs. The Report will be written by the 2014 CSU Stanislaus WASC Special Visit Self Study Team (the Team). The 2014 Team will consist of the following members selected in the following fashion. The structure of the team and the selection process is modeled after the practices used to create the WASC Special Visit Research Team, which conducted research and consultation with stakeholder groups and wrote the CSU Stanislaus WASC Special Visit Report dated August 2011.

2014 WASC Special Visit Self Study Team

AVPAA/Academic Planning and Analysis/ALO serving as Chair;
Three faculty members recommended by the Committee on Committees;
Two MPPs recommended by the Provost.

The chair of the Team is designated by position; in this case, the chair will be Dr. Marjorie Jaasma. The Committee on Committees (CoC) will consult with the Provost regarding the selection of faculty before the final appointment. The Provost will consult with the Speaker of the Faculty regarding the selection of MPPs before the final appointment. The Provost has final authority to make appointments to the Team. The Team will be staffed by Ms. Susan Clapper, and additional help will be available as needed. One of the members of the Team will perform the task of principal writer, and special support will be available for that role as needed and will be determined before duties commence. If no Team member is willing or able to take on the role of principal writer, that role will be one that the Team delegates. General support to the Team will be provided as needed and will be determined before duties commence.

Charge to the 2014 WASC Special Visit Self Study Team

The broad charge to the Team is to prepare a self-study to meet the specific charges discussed below. The self-study will include evidence collection, research, assessment, actions, and a written self-study report. As the first priority, the Team must, in collaboration with the Division of Academic Affairs, address the charge outlined in the WASC Commission Action Letter of March 7, 2012. Key dimensions in addressing the charge are assessing the current state of the issues, particularly relative to strengths and weaknesses; evaluating the effectiveness of any actions intended to mitigate the problems and/or changes in practice or behavior; and making recommendations regarding the future policy, actions and/or practices. To assess the current state of the charge issues, the Team should become familiar with the problems identified in the July 2010 WASC Commission Action Letter and the campus response and gather data and evidence regarding the continuing actions to improve the charge issues. The Team should use appropriate research methodologies to collect and analyze relevant data. The Team is not responsible for instituting new actions designed to improve the charge issues. Leadership relative to instituting new actions designed to improve the charge issues will be provided by the Trust Restoration Planning Committee (Speaker of the Faculty, Speaker-elect of the Faculty, Provost, and Vice President of Faculty Affairs and Human Resources; TRPC) who will work through the normal shared governance processes to implement new actions. The TRPC is an ad hoc committee that was instituted by the SEC and Administration in response to the “leadership and governance” charge in the WASC Commission Action Letter of July 13, 2010. The TRPC produced a resolution, passed by the Academic Senate and signed by the President, instituting six actions to improve trust between faculty and upper administration, thus addressing the problems related to leadership and governance. The TRPC is well-positioned to carry out the charge of considering additional actions in preparation for the 2014 Special Visit. The WASC Special Visit Team and the WASC Commission Action Letter of March 7, 2012 both commended the TRPC, especially the faculty who served on the committee. “The Commission especially supports ‘the good and courageous work of tenured faculty on the Ad Hoc Trust Restoration Committee,’ which was singled out by the team as exemplifying a productive path forward” (WASC Commission Action Letter of March 7, 2012, pp. 2-3).
In the coming months, because the Team will be immersed in the WASC charges, they may recommend actions to the TRPC to improve the situation. The Team and the TRPC are expected to communicate frequently and fully and serve a resource to each other. The most important objective is for the University to improve in a sustainable fashion on the WASC charges.

The Team's recommendations at the conclusion of the self-study report should include long-term solutions to the problems cited in the WASC Charge. The Team will consult appropriately with the various stakeholder groups involved in the issues outlined in the charge and will be supported by all of Academic Affairs. The Team may reach out to various committees and administrators, may form task groups for assistance as is reasonable and prudent, and should seek guidance from TRPC on such matters as needed. Beyond the specific charge in the WASC Commission Action Letter of March 7, 2012, the Team should carefully consider the recommendations and suggestions found in the CSU Stanislaus WASC Special Visit Report of August 2011 and the WASC Special Visit Team Report dated November 26, 2011. The first document was the report submitted to WASC by CSU Stanislaus, and the second document was written by the WASC Special Visit Team for the campus after their visit. The recommendations and suggestions in these two documents are generally presumed to be (or remain) helpful, but the Team should make an assessment.

WASC Commission Action Letter of March 7, 2012 requesting a Special Visit in fall 2014

The March 7, 2012 WASC Commission Action Letter outlined the following charge.

*The Commission acted to:*


2. *Request a Special Visit in fall 2014 to evaluate progress in addressing the issues that were the primary focus of this visit, especially shared governance and the campus climate, as well as progress on shared roles in strategic planning and in the formulation of retention, promotion and tenure policies.*

3. *Continue with the scheduled comprehensive review in the spring of 2019. (p. 2, WASC Commission Action Letter – California State University March 7, 2012)*

The charge to the current Team regards only item 2 above. The following is a more detailed discussion of the charge in item 2.

The major charge for the 2014 Special Visit from the WASC Commission Action Letter of March 7, 2012 “is to evaluate progress in addressing the issues that were the primary focus of this visit” . . . Thus, the major charge in the July 13, 2010 WASC Commission Action Letter regarding problems with leadership and governance has been held over to the Special Visit 2014 and further work is required. The WASC Commission Action Letter of 2012 specifically states the following on page 1.

*The Commission’s action to reaffirm the accreditation of CSU Stanislaus in 2010 was accompanied by concern regarding ongoing tensions between senior administration and faculty. Expressions of mutual mistrust, reported by both the Capacity and Preparatory Review and the Educational Effectiveness Review teams, were found to pose a serious threat to otherwise effective educational programs at the institution. As the problematic nature of these relationships appeared not to have*
been ameliorated by the time of the reaccreditation decision, the Commission called for a Special Visit to explore progress in addressing this concern. While not ascribing blame to any parties, the Commission did ask the administration to take the initial steps toward seeking resolution.

The Commission endorses the recommendations of the Special Visit team and wishes to emphasize the need for continuing attention to the development of an effective working relationship between the administration and faculty. The institution’s report and the team’s on-site review reveal a number of purposeful initiatives on the part of the administration, and efforts by selected faculty members. The institution’s report also delineates a thoughtful research project designed to assess the impact of these initiatives on the climate of trust among the stakeholders. As observed by the team and documented in the institution’s own candid report, the outcomes have been modest at best, resulting in a shared recognition that much difficult work lies ahead (p. 1, WASC Commission Action Letter – California State University March 7, 2012).

The current charge centers on finishing the work of the 2011 Special Visit relative to improving the working relationship between the senior administration and the faculty. Thus, the aspects of the charge from the July 13, 2010 WASC Commission Action Letter regarding this relationship remain relevant and need to be addressed. Additionally, the WASC Commission Action Letter of March 7, 2012 provides additional and new information that further specifies and provides insight into the current charge. The issues raised in the following passages need to be specifically addressed. Some of these issues are cited in the Commission’s actions request for a special visit (see Action 2), and some are from other sections of the March 7, 2012 Action Letter.

The Commission especially supports “the good and courageous work of tenured faculty on the Ad Hoc Trust Restoration Committee,” which was singled out by the team as exemplifying a productive path forward. The outcomes from this initiative could provide a foothold on which other campus efforts might gain traction and become productive. The Commission commends the actions that have been taken and urges in the most explicit terms that these and related initiatives must not be relaxed (p. 2, WASC Commission Action Letter – California State University March 7, 2012).

The Commission particularly urges your office to play a leadership role in modeling collaboration and creating an atmosphere in which courageous conversations about divisive issues can be had with safety and mutual respect. These difficult conversations must address historic points of tension, including . . .

... the role of faculty in strategic planning . . .

... and the formalization of faculty policies dealing with retention, promotion, and tenure (RPT). In this regard, faculty must fully engage with the administration to address the challenge of establishing RPT policies that are institution-wide and include rigorous requirements that reflect good practice in higher education.

Summary of the charges in the WASC Commission Action Letter – California State University, Stanislaus – March 7, 2012

1. Improvement of working relationship between faculty and upper administration.
This charge is continued from the WASC Commission Action Letter of July 13, 2010 and the Special Visit Team Report of November 26, 2011.

2. Improvement in the practice of shared governance.

This charge is continued from the WASC Commission Action Letter of July 13, 2010 and the Special Visit Team Report of November 26, 2011. The term “shared governance” is not used in the July 13, 2010 letter. So, the specific focus on shared governance is new. However, statements such as the following in the July 13, 2010 WASC Commission Action Letter certainly imply that shared governance was part of the original charge and, at the least, governance practices were called into question.

_The Commission therefore expects immediate, inclusive, and productive endeavors to create a climate of collaborative and effective governance at CSU Stanislaus (p. 2 WASC Commission Action Letter – California State University, Stanislaus July 13, 2010)._  

_The Commission acted to: . . . 3. Schedule a Special Visit to the institution for fall 2011 to ensure substantial progress in matters related to leadership and governance described in this letter” (p. 2 WASC Commission Action Letter – California State University, Stanislaus July 13, 2010)._  


3. Improvement in faculty participation in strategic planning and progress on shared roles in strategic planning.

This charge was not in the July 13, 2010 WASC Commission Action Letter. There was no mention of strategic planning in that letter, so this is a new charge. Certainly, the concept of shared roles and collaboration is not new and was in the July 13th letter, but the focus on faculty shared involvement with strategic planning is new relative to these documents.

4. Improvement in the formulation of retention, promotion and tenure policies that reflect good practice in higher education.

This charge was not in the July 13, 2010 WASC Commission Action Letter, but it is not a new recommendation from WASC. This issue was addressed as a recommendation in the Educational Effectiveness Review Team Report (2010) (see below) that informed the WASC Commission Action Letter of March 7, 2012. It is important that the Division of Academic Affairs and the Team consider this charge carefully and not overlook its dimensions because it is quite distinct from the other charges.

_Based on extensive discussion of the primacy of teaching and learning during at least the past five years, CSU Stanislaus should continue to refine its criteria (i.e., standards by which judgments can be made) for retention, promotion and tenure with regard to both teaching and research (scholarship and creative activity) at the department, college and university levels, completing the review and renewal process initiated in 2009 with the Faculty Senate resolutions (p. 34, Report of the WASC Visiting Team, Educational Effectiveness Review to California State University, Stanislaus)._
5. In planning for the 2014 Special Visit, the Team should carefully consider productive insights provided by documents and actions such as the CSU Stanislaus WASC Special Visit Report dated August 2011, the actual November 2011 Special Visit, and the WASC Special Visit Team Report of November 26, 2011.

There were two additional areas cited in the July 13, 2010 WASC Commission Action Letter for “continuing institutional attention,” and they were the “Assessment of Learning” and “Program Review.” The March 7, 2012 WASC Commission Action Letter states the following regarding these areas of concern.

*The Commission commends CSU Stanislaus for its excellent work in assessing student learning. As documented by the team, the faculty is deeply engaged in assessing learning, and program review at the University reflects best practices.*

The WASC Commission Action Letter of March 7, 2012 provided no follow-up charge regarding these matters, so they no longer constitute an area for continuing institutional attention relative to the 2014 Special Visit and are not part of this charge. However, though not addressed as part of the follow-up charge in the March 7, 2012 WASC Commission Action Letter, both the assessment of student learning and program review remain part of the ongoing activities to be reported in the 2015 Interim Report, and the next comprehensive visit in 2019. These activities will be based on findings in the Educational Effectiveness Team Report (2010) and the follow-up WASC Commission Action Letter dated July 13, 2010, and they are important academic processes central to the mission.

**CSU Stanislaus WASC Special Visit Report August 2011**

The following is directly from the Special Visit Report of August 2011 recommending future actions. It is important that we learn and benefit from that report and the experience of that visit as much as possible. Thus, an additional charge to the Team (listed above) is to carefully consider the CSU Stanislaus WASC Special Visit Report of August 2011, the November 2011 Special Visit, and the WASC Special Visit Team Report (November 26, 2011) in planning and writing the self-study report for the 2014 Special Visit.

**Future Actions from the CSU Stanislaus Special Visit Report August 2011.**

1. *Engage the campus community to discuss the outcomes of the research findings in this Special Visit Report;*
2. *Continue to gather, analyze, and use data to inform decision making and operationalize more effective practices of shared governance;*
3. *Continue to monitor progress and slippage on the issues raised in this research; and*
4. *Continue to dialogue with faculty leaders and administrators on how to operationalize concretely substantive actions to address shared governance and to promote increasingly effective working relations between faculty and administration.*

The “Concluding Statement of the Special Visit Report” (August 2011) states the following.

*Administration has acknowledged a commitment to reviewing progress annually by documenting actions and determining impacts. Research will contribute to ongoing identification of issues. Based on the AY 2010-11 work of the Ad Hoc TRPC, the Academic Senate (May 10, 2011) passed a resolution in support of six recommendations for campus implementation beginning in fall 2011. The implementation of these*
combined actions will contribute to a multi-year commitment to address issues which we will document in our update report due to WASC in 2015. Progress towards change will be an ongoing commitment (CSU Stanislaus WASC Special Visit Report, August 2011).

Timeline

1. Establish the WASC 2014 Special Visit Team by the end of fall semester 2012.
2. Write a comprehensive plan for the 2014 Special Visit Report. The Team will work with TRPC to write the plan.
3. Report with a self-study draft distributed to the campus for feedback in May 2014.
4. Submission of the final report will likely occur in July or August 2014 depending on instructions from WASC.
5. The visit is scheduled for fall 2014.

Conclusion

Once the 2014 WASC Special Visit Self Study Team is named, Speaker Grobner and I will meet together with the Team and the TRPC to review this charge and related plans. The Division of Academic Affairs and other relevant stakeholder groups will be given periodic updates and will support the self-study effort.

cc: Dr. Joseph Sheley, President (Interim)
Dr. Mark Grobner, Speaker of the Faculty
Senate Executive Committee
Senior Staff
Dean’s Council
Academic Affairs Council

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