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PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Ralph A. Wolff

July 8, 2010

Jean-Lou Aristide Chameau
California Institute of Technology
1200 E. California Blvd, MC 204-31
Pasadena, CA 91125

Dear President Chameau:

At its meeting on June 16-18, 2010, the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) team that conducted the visit to the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) on March 30 - April 2, 2010. The Commission also reviewed the Educational Effectiveness Review Report submitted by Caltech prior to the visit, as well as the institution's response to the team's report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and Vice Provost and ALO Melany Hunt. The updates and additional information you provided and your observations were helpful.

The team found the Institute to be actively engaged in the review process. Because the Institute chose themes for the review that mattered to Caltech, the Institute was able to use the review process for reflection and action with the WASC framework as a vehicle and guide. The institution's EER report aligned well with the Institutional Proposal and showed substantial, though sometimes incomplete, progress on matters identified by the Commission at the time of the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) for continuing attention.

The three selected themes – the Core Curriculum, the Honor Code, and undergraduate research – are central aspects of the institution's identity and thus the subjects of perennial attention. Work on the Core Curriculum, through a task force of both faculty and students, has resulted in greater clarity about its rationale and several key course changes. The impact of the Honor Code is being thoughtfully evaluated in terms of the operational challenges in its implementation. Undergraduate research, vital to the preparation of the Caltech student, is set to engage an even larger percentage of students than it has in the past.

Overall, the team was deeply impressed with the many examples of evidence that Caltech is providing an extraordinary educational experience for its students and is prepared to both continue and enhance that practice. The Commission endorses the commendations and the recommendations of the team and draws the attention of the institution to the following areas for continuing attention.

Core Curriculum. The Core Curriculum is clearly distinctive to Caltech, designed and updated to meet its mission and the particular needs and goals of its undergraduate population. The Task Force that has moved the refinement of the

Core Curriculum forward now needs to bring its work to conclusion and to substantiate the effectiveness of the recent modifications. To this end, the multiple methods being used to assess the intended outcomes of the Core Curriculum should be studied and used to validate the current curriculum and/or guide additional changes. As the Core draws from and feeds into many concentrations, the institution should address the need for a coherent voice that articulates the Core Curriculum rationale to the larger Caltech community in order to foster support for the Core and its alignment with Caltech's mission. (CFRs 1.2, 2.2)

Undergraduate Research. The undergraduate research program at Caltech garners strong endorsements from students and alumni and, appropriately, is being protected in difficult budget times. The goal of ensuring that all undergraduates desiring to do so can participate in a research experience from one or more of the available avenues is an ambitious undertaking and should be both supported and monitored. Strategies making it easier for students to match with an appropriate research mentor should also be explored. More formalization of the assessment of undergraduate research, through surveys of mentors and a shared rubric by which to assess learning, would document student achievement in this important outcome and provide data to be used for further expansion and improvement of the research program. (CFRS 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.8, 2.9)

Assessment of Student Learning. Caltech faculty members are deeply involved in assessing student learning on an informal one-to-one basis, which is one of the many strengths of the Caltech learning experience. However, as the team noted, “specific learning outcomes of the various academic programs...were not consistently presented” and the “faculty and students are not in full agreement as to what a Caltech education consists of – that is, what the core learning outcomes are.” Further developing the institutional learning outcomes and devising ways to document and use the results of multiple assessments will benefit student learning and the ongoing improvements that are hallmarks of a Caltech education. The Commission urges that this be undertaken with as much commitment as shown in addressing the three themes chosen by the Institute. (CFRs 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.4-4.6)

The Commission acted to:

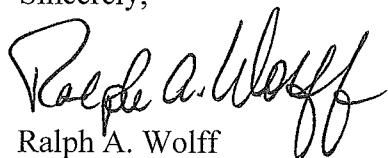
1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness Review team report and reaffirm the accreditation of California Institute of Technology.
2. Schedule the Capacity and Preparatory Review for spring 2020 and the Educational Effectiveness Review for fall 2021. The Institutional Proposal will be due in spring 2018.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that California Institute of Technology has satisfactorily addressed the Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness, and has successfully completed the three-stage review conducted under the Standards of Accreditation. Between this action and the time of the next review, the institution is expected to continue its progress, particularly with respect to educational effectiveness and student learning.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter will be sent to the chair of Caltech'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 wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that the Institute 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 and Executive Director

RW/rw

cc: Sherwood Lingenfelter, Commission Chair
Melany Hunt, ALO
Kent Kresa, Board Chair
Members of the EER team
Richard Winn