

June 26, 2014

Admiral Thomas Cropper
President
California Maritime Academy
200 Maritime Academy Drive
Vallejo, CA 94590-8181

Dear President Cropper:

At its meeting by conference call on May 29, 2014, a panel of the Interim Report Committee considered the Interim Report submitted by California Maritime Academy (CMA) on March 1, 2014. In addition to your Interim Report, the panel had access to the Commission's July 5, 2011 action letter and the institution's accreditation history. The panel and I would like to thank you, Gerald S. Jakubowski, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Graham Benton, Professor and Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO), Beverly Byl, Vice President for University Advancement, Academic Dean Nael Aly, Evelyn Andrews, Registrar, and, Nicole Hill, Director of Financial Aid and Chair of Unity Council, for participating in the call and giving the panel an opportunity to discuss the report. The conversation was informative and helped the panelists better understand California Maritime Academy's challenges and progress since 2011.

The Commission's July 2011 Educational Effectiveness Review action letter called for the Interim Report to focus on four topics: 1) assessment of student learning, program review, and student achievement; 2) unity and diversity; 3) refinement of the leadership program; and, 4) ongoing state funding challenges.

The panel expressed their appreciation for the obvious time and effort CMA devoted to the 2014 Interim Report and found the report organized and well written. The panel commended California Maritime Academy for the report's depth and breadth and overall thoroughness. The report was informative and helpful to the panel, targeting recommendations from the Commission's action letter. It was clear to the panel that a great deal of good progress has been made since the EER.

Assessment of student learning, program review, and student achievement. CMA plans to address the need for greater competency in assessment by hiring an institutional research (IR) staff person by July 1, 2014. Over the past two years, CMA has put in place a viable structure for collecting and analyzing student enrollment and achievement data. CMA also benefits from participation in two organizations, the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE) and the California State University (CSU) Graduation Initiative, to secure external student achievement data to use for benchmarking and goal setting. (CFRs 2.4, 4.2)

CMA reported a 97% first-time, full-time freshman student retention rate from fall 2013 to spring 2014, compared with 93% for fall 2012 to spring 2013. The Academy's most recent fall to fall first-time, full-time freshman retention rate was 84%. CMA reported that the four year graduation rate, 54-56%, was the highest in the CSU and the six year rate was second only to one other CSU institution. CMA is ahead of overall graduation targets set as a part of the CSU Graduation Initiative. The Academy plans to make public these and other student achievement data, including first-time, full-time and transfer students, on a public facing webpage in 2014. (CFRs 1.2, 2.6, 2.10)

Student achievement data was not readily available to the Interim Report review panel. It was unclear to the panel whether CMA's retention data reflects only first-time, full-time students or includes transfer students. CMA should clarify this with the comprehensive review team and, if the panel is correct that those data only focus on first-time, full-time students, include retention and graduation data for transfer students. The panel recommends that the comprehensive review team have access to all of CMA's student success data. The panel also recommends that CMA use more conventional methods of reporting degree completion data. Finally, CMA should provide the comprehensive review team with several years of student achievement data and not just the most recent year's results, to help reflect data trends. (CFRs 1.2, 2.6, 2.10)

CMA reported that all of the institution's programs had either been through a program review or were "in the pipeline" for review, though the data was not readily available to the panel. The panel noted that CMA's track record for professional accreditation is excellent. CMA is encouraged to coordinate the specialized program accreditation process with the institutional program review process to avoid duplication of labor. CMA should provide evidence to the comprehensive review team that the specialized accreditation reviews include assessment of student learning outcomes and/or other required elements of an institution's internal program review. CMA should also make evident to the comprehensive review team how annual assessment reviews flow into the program review process. (CFRs 2.4, 3.10, 4.2, 4.4, 4.7)

In summary, CMA has accomplished a great deal in this area in a short period of time. A great deal remains to be done to establish a robust institutional research function. The panel advises CMA to consult with other CSU IR offices to learn about best practices that will align with your institution. IR functionality will be judged, in part, by how it informs CMA about which programs, activities, and initiatives are working, and how it drives changes to make improvements. CMA should provide ample evidence of this "closing the loop" in assessment of student learning, program review and student achievement by the time of its comprehensive review. (CFRs 1.4, 2.4, 2.6, 2.10, 3.10, 4.6, 4.7)

Unity and diversity. The panel commends CMA for restructuring the Unity Council to give it more power and authority. And, the panel was impressed with the number and quality of activities and initiatives launched to foster diversity over the past two years. The panel was also impressed with the way CMA is framing its work going forward, using a reflective and data-driven process to inform strategic planning in this area.

CMA reported that the strategic plan will not be finalized by August 2014. CMA should share the final and approved plan with the comprehensive review team and include evidence of execution of the plan, assessment of results from your efforts, and changes made based on that assessment (CFRs 1.4, 2.6, 2.10, 4.7)

While CMA was ahead of overall CSU Graduation Initiative goals, the Academy has not closed the achievement gap between those overall results and rates for under-represented minority (URM) students. CMA did clarify that the achievement gap trend for all CSU institutions is flat. (CFR 1.4)

Unfortunately, the review panel did not have access to data used by the CMA Graduation Rate Initiative Committee to gauge progress with your diversity efforts. The panel recommends that CMA make these data available to the comprehensive review team. The panel also recommends that the comprehensive review team have access to program review data and that those data be disaggregated not only by gender, but by URM students, as well. (CFRs 1.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10, 4.7)

Refinement of the leadership program. It was clear to the review panel that CMA is taking the recommendation to refine the leadership program seriously. The panel commended CMA for clarifying the charge to the program and for instituting a taskforce that has developed clear goals and a timeline for action. The panel was impressed with the development of an effective program structure grounded in best practices. The panel was also impressed with CMA's openness to learn from your efforts including discontinuing strategies you find ineffective. CMA should not only share the three year program implementation plan with the comprehensive review team, but provide evidence of execution of the plan, assessment of results from your efforts, and changes made based on that assessment. (CFRs 2.11, 3.10, 4.7)

Ongoing state funding challenges. The panel commended CMA for working effectively with the CSU Chancellor's office to secure funding in the short run to address funding needs. It was clear to the panel that CMA is aware of the issues that come with enrollment increases, i.e. not just increased revenues, but increased costs that risk serving more students than funding can support. The panel recommends that CMA establish an optimum enrollment target that strikes the necessary balance between costs and revenue. (CFRs 3.4, 4.7)

After extensive discussion of the progress that has been made by California Maritime Academy thus far, the panel acted to:

1. Receive the Interim Report.
2. Recommend continuing with the Mid-Cycle Review in summer 2015.
3. Request that progress on the five topics addressed in this letter be included in the institutional report for the Offsite Review (OSR) in fall 2018 and Accreditation Visit in spring 2019.

The panel would like to affirm the hard work and important steps California Maritime Academy has taken to address these issues to this point. I wish you and California Maritime Academy every success.

Sincerely,



Maureen A. Maloney
Vice President

cc: Graham Benton, ALO
Members of the Interim Report Committee