WASC Western Association of Schools & Colleges
Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges & Universities

July 5, 2011

Maria Klawe
President
Harvey Mudd College
301 Platt Boulevard
Claremont, CA 91711-5990

Dear President Klawe:

At its meeting June 22-24, 2011, the Commission considered the report of the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) team that conducted the visit to Harvey Mudd College March 1-3, 2011. The Commission also had access to the Educational Effectiveness Review report prepared by Harvey Mudd College prior to the visit, the institution's thoughtful and detailed May 16, 2011 response to the visiting team report, and the documents relating to the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) visit conducted October 6-8, 2009. The Commission appreciates the steps you have already taken to address the issues raised in the team's EER report and found the opportunity to discuss the review with you, Vice President for Academic Affairs Robert Cave, and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and ALO Janel Hastings, to be very helpful.

Harvey Mudd's 2007 Institutional Proposal outlined two themes for this comprehensive review: experiential learning and diversity. The 2009 CPR institutional report expanded on those themes and added a new topic: assessment of the core curriculum and department learning goals. The College used its 2010 EER report as an opportunity to examine its effectiveness in the three thematic areas by conducting a series of studies that looked at the educational impact of capstone experiences on student learning; the relationship between race, ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status and student academic performance; the effectiveness of the new core curriculum in preparing students for the major; the quality of students' writing as a result of a new pilot course in composition; and the assessment of department-level student learning outcomes.

Overall, Harvey Mudd is to be commended for approaching the accrediting process with a spirit of inquiry and an interest in improvement; producing well-written, well-organized and well-documented reports; undertaking carefully planned research investigations that led to meaningful program and curricular improvements; and generating widespread faculty collaboration, enthusiasm and support for the assessment process. As the EER team noted, "[T]here was no doubt about the seriousness and care that characterizes the institution's engagement with learning across its programs."

The Commission's action letter of March 5, 2010 highlighted four major issues for special attention during the interval between the CPR and EER visits: putting in

place a well-developed infrastructure for the assessment and improvement of student learning; defining and assessing the educational benefits of a diverse learning environment and continuing to work to increase the numbers of underrepresented students, faculty and staff; identifying ways to reduce the disparities in graduation rates among subpopulations; and providing evidence (through benchmarking or other means) that course and program outcomes are being attained at a level or standard appropriate for the College.

The EER team commended the College's impressive progress in assessment and program review and identified a number of achievements. All departments have learning outcomes and now conduct assessment studies, generally using direct measures of student learning that are reported annually to the Dean of the Faculty. The College has undertaken assessments of its new core curriculum, a pilot writing course, and its capstone courses, and made improvements on the basis of the findings. The work of the Office of Institutional Research and the institutionalization of the campus-wide Assessment Committee have assured that assessment will become a routine part of the College's operations. Five of the seven departments have completed one program review, leading to course and program revisions, improved understanding of student learning, and implications for planning and budgeting. The Commission concurs with the team's observations that the College has provided "ample evidence that it understands the role of assessment in the life of a learning institution" and has developed an "appreciation of a strategic, systematic, and sustained approach to educational effectiveness."

With respect to diversity, the team noted the College's accomplishments in increasing the numbers of women faculty and students, undertaking self-studies to examine the role of demographic characteristics in student success, and developing new initiatives to support campus diversity. However, the Commission concurs with the team in strongly urging the College to do more to recruit, retain and help assure the success of underrepresented students, faculty and staff so that Harvey Mudd College can reach its aspirations of "unsurpassed excellence and diversity at every level."

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

Continued Progress in Implementing the College's Commitment to Gender and Ethnic Diversity. It was clear to the team that the College recognizes that progress needs to be made in recruiting and retaining a diverse group of students, faculty, staff and administrators and in creating an environment that contributes to their academic, personal and professional success. New initiatives are being discussed or are just getting underway to expand the pool of qualified underrepresented student applicants; create a campus climate in which all members feel welcomed, included and valued; help the institution better understand and address disparities in graduation rates; and provide a supportive infrastructure for a diverse campus community. The Commission urges that this area continue to be a high priority, that plans and initiatives be formulated, implemented and evaluated in a timely fashion, and that progress in campus diversity be monitored on an ongoing basis. (CFRs 1.1, 1.5, 2.10, 2.13, 3.2)

Educational Effectiveness. The team was impressed with Harvey Mudd's accomplishments in enhancing educational effectiveness and improving student learning. However, the Commission

shares the team's concerns in two areas: the need for the College to "give the same attention to quality assurance in student life and other areas that it has provided for the academic programs" and the need to sustain the College's work in educational effectiveness and continuous improvement in light of increasing demands and expansion of assessment efforts. The Commission recommends that practices of assessment and program review be applied to the co-curricular aspects of the College. The Commission further recommends that the College work to ensure the sustainability of its current and future efforts in assessment, program review, quality assurance and continuous improvement. In addition, the team noted that college-level goals and outcomes are not easily located on the College homepage and that not all departmental learning outcomes are posted on departments' websites. The Commission recommends that the College make institution-wide outcomes more easily accessible and assure that all departments have listed their learning outcomes. Finally, the Commission expects that institutions will make public the results of their assessments of learning outcomes and their data on student achievement (e.g., retention and graduation rates overall and disaggregated) at both the institutional and degree level. (CFRs 1.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.4-4.7)

Capstone Courses. Harvey Mudd's mission is to educate students in science, math, technology and engineering who are well versed in the humanities and social sciences so that they can assume "leadership in their fields with a clear understanding of the impact of their work on society." Harvey Mudd has chosen to require capstone courses, either a senior research project or a clinic project that tackles a real-world industry problem, to give students the opportunity to demonstrate that they have achieved the learning goals set by the institution. The College's assessment of its capstone courses, however, revealed some limitations with regard to students developing an appreciation of the social impact of their projects. The team recommended, and the Commission concurs, that the College broaden the definition of capstone projects and the learning outcomes that students are expected to demonstrate in order to place more emphasis on the social responsibility aspect of the mission. (CFRs 1.1, 2.3-2.6, 4.6-4.8)

Given the above, the Commission acted to:

1. Receive the Educational Effectiveness Review report and reaffirm the accreditation of Harvey Mudd College.

2. Schedule Harvey Mudd's next comprehensive review visit for spring 2021. As you know, the Commission is in the process of considering major revisions to the current three-stage institutional review process. It expects these revisions to be adopted by June 2012 and implemented during the following two years. Once the revised process is adopted, WASC staff will communicate with you and your ALO to explain the impact of any changes on your next comprehensive review and on the interactions you may have with WASC before that review.

3. Request an Interim Report due on March 1, 2016, addressing progress on issues raised in the team's report. The Commission commends the considerable achievements of Harvey Mudd and is interested in keeping updated on the success of initiatives planned or underway.

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirms that Harvey Mudd College 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 Harvey Mudd'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 College 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
Janel Hastings, ALO
William A, Mingst, Board Chair
Members of the EER team
Barbara Gross Davis