Dr. Sandra S. Harper  
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi  
6300 Ocean Drive  
Corpus Christi, TX 78412

Dear Dr. Harper:

I apologize for our oversight in responding to your letter of May 24, 2005, and the prospectus for the Ph.D. in Coastal and Marine System Science degree program that began in fall 2005. The proposed program was approved by both the University’s Board of Regents, as well as the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. In the year 2000, the University received a forty-six million dollar endowment to create the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies (HRI). Part of this endowment was earmarked to support existing collaborative research projects and to foster a Ph.D. program, the one described in this prospectus, which would blend the Natural Sciences with Computational Sciences and Public Policy.

Coursework will involve 90 semester credit hours of post-baccalaureate work, a qualifying examination at the end of the first year of study, and substantial original research. The program integrates traditional scientific disciplines to gain a holistic understanding of the Gulf of Mexico regional environment. Research from this program will address complex scientific questions with special attention paid to the issue of how the major ecosystems of the coastal and marine zone interact with increasing urbanization pressures from around the Gulf of Mexico Basin.

Learning objectives for the program appear appropriate. You have documented satisfactorily the scholarship of the faculty and their experience serving on doctoral/master’s degree advising committees. Library, physical, and financial resources appear sufficient to support the proposal. Please describe the systematic evaluation of instructional results and the ways in which those results will be used to improve the program.

We approve the proposal, contingent upon a satisfactory response to our request for additional information, and shall include it within the scope of accreditation previously granted. Since this will be the fourth doctoral program offered by your institution, the institution will be advanced from Level V to Level VI.

Best regards,

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.  
President  
Commission on Colleges

BSW/RBR:jdw

cc: Dr. Gerald D. Lord