Mission and Goals:

The mission and goals of the Center for Autism are clearly defined and well aligned with the University mission and goals related to student success, meeting workforce needs, faculty retention and recruitment, and increasing revenue.

Activities:

The Center has been quite active in procuring intramural and external grants to support high quality research and publication; conducting community and clinical programs that provide services to individuals with autism at CSUF and in the community; and creating opportunities for CSUF student participation in high impact practices such as participation in clinical internships, research assistantships, and service. It is clear that the Center has been quite productive in contributing to the knowledge base, collaborating with other centers and faculty across the university, and producing significant benefits to CSUF students, faculty, and the community.

Organizational Structure and Governance:

This interdisciplinary center has a clear, well-functioning structure with leadership by three co-directors, Dr. Erica Howell in the College of Education and Drs. Rachel Fenning and Jason Baker in the College of Health and Human Development. The Center’s organization into two “cores” (Education Core and Applied Developmental Core) appears to function quite effectively. The Applied Developmental Core has an advisory board comprised of established researchers and service providers who are consulted on an “as needed” basis. The productivity of the center and its many successful partnerships indicate that the current organizational structure and governance are functioning quite effectively.

Resources and Sustainability:

The Center for Autism has been self-sustaining through the volunteer efforts and resourcefulness of the co-directors and through extramural grants, donations, and fund raising. Space has been provided by both the College of Health and Human Development and the College of Education. The co-directors’ commitment to continuing the work of the Center within current resource
constraints – and particularly their willingness to volunteer their time -- makes the Center very sustainable.

**Highlights and Accomplishments:**

The Center has received recognition for its outstanding contributions to research and services for students and adults with autism spectrum disorders and has received significant funding through the HRSA, NICHD, and NIH’s National Cancer Institute. The high level of student engagement in the Center’s activities is also a highlight and an outstanding example of high impact practices at Cal State Fullerton.

**Planning and Strategic Outlook:**

The Center’s co-directors plan to continue their current efforts related to high-quality research, professional training, student engagement and advocacy. The Center continues to address critical needs for research and services related to autism spectrum disorders, and the outlook for its continued success is very positive.

**Conclusion**

The CSUF Center for Autism has completed its first three years, and the co-directors have established a highly successful, effective center. The research, educational, and service activities address important issues and advance the mission and goals of the university. The Center serves and represents the CSUF campus very well, and it has received well-deserved recognition both on campus and in the community through local media. The co-directors are to be commended for their contributions and encouraged to continue the activities and plans outlined in the self-study report.