

PROGRAM REVIEW FOR CENTERS AND INSTITUTES

Center/Institute: California Desert Studies Center/California Desert Studies Consortium

Director/Administrator: William Presch

College/Academic Unit: Academic Affairs (California State University, Desert Studies Consortium)

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From Director/Administrator:**

Self-Study

1. Mission

The California Desert Studies Consortium (CDSC) mission is clearly stated. The main purpose of CDSC is to encourage the understanding and appreciation of California deserts by developing student academic skills and public awareness through desert studies. Such awareness includes instruction, research and special projects, and programs in and out of the classroom. The mission is executed with the implementation of a number of activities including : the improvement and development of the Soda Springs Desert Studies Center and other desert sites; the development of a curriculum related to desert studies; the dissemination of information by means of periodicals or occasional publications; the development of faculty programs in the various specialized areas included in desert studies and the acquisition of funds to support activities related to desert studies from both public and private agencies.

2. Goals and Activities

Other goals of the Consortium include the acquisition and preservation of materials, documents, and specimens relevant to desert studies and the development of mutually beneficial partnerships with community service programs related to the study of the desert. The primary purpose of the Consortium is to operate and manage the 1280 acres associated with the Soda Springs Desert Studies Center in the Mojave National Preserve. The Center provides opportunities for individuals and groups to conduct research, receive instruction, and experience the desert environment. The Center manages the 1280 acres under an agreement with the Department of Interior.

3. Resources and Sustainability

Since its beginning the Center has received its baseline support from the Office of the Chancellor additional revenue comes from various users fees. The Center was successful in its renewal application of the Undergraduate Mentoring in Environmental Sciences program

of NSF. This program supports undergraduate students in the Southern California Ecosystem Research Program.

4. Organizational Structure and Governance

The CSDC is composed of seven California State University campuses: Fullerton, Long Beach, Pomona, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Northridge and Dominguez Hills. The administrative campus for the consortium is CSU Fullerton. A governing board (Board of Governors) of a representative from each of the seven campuses provides oversight. The administrative headquarters at CSU-Fullerton includes a Director and support staff. In addition, on location there is a maintenance mechanic, site manager, and site steward. On campus the Center reports to the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

5. Highlights and Accomplishments

In 2007 a new format for the Center webpage was introduced with new information and additional links and information about the Center and related activities. On the website for example, is the Bird List which lists 242 species observed on the acres of the Desert Studies Center. The Center was a featured presentation on the Public Broadcast System in *Huell Howser's California Golden Parks* series the presentation (a 30 minute video) is titled "Zzyzx with Huell Howser" and provides a tour of the facility and looked at early days of the site. The Center sponsored its twenty-second annual desert symposium in spring 2008, the theme was *Trough to trough, the Colorado River and the Salton Sea* numerous research presentations (including the research of students) were presented and the symposium also sponsored a related field trip. Over the years almost annually the Center has one of its goals to continue to enhance the facilities, for example this past year the Center's satellite provider is now HughesNet. This service has provided the Center with the bandwidth necessary to handle the increasing use of the uplink by both users and the agencies.

6. Planning and Strategic Outlook

The Director of the Center has among his responsibilities coordination and development of programs with the CSU Consortium members. He also provides leadership in the continued development of the academic and research programs. The Center appears to be effectively and efficiently operated. The Center continues to provide opportunities for individuals and groups to conduct research, receive instruction, and experience the desert environment.

7. Viability

In 2007-08 utilization for individuals was 2,129 and use days 6,821 according to the annual report user days showed a decrease of 458 days with the number of individuals down by 37. The drop it was reported was caused by the lack of enrollment in the Extended Education offerings spurred by the economic downturn and the price of gasoline. The Center is noted for its facilities, its location, and the learning and research environment it provides.

8. Appendices

Organizational Chart
Duties and Responsibilities of staff
Compilation of Improvement Projects at the Center

Summary and Recommendation(s)

The California Desert Studies Consortium (CDSC) is comprised of seven California State University campuses including Fullerton, Long Beach, Pomona, Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Dominguez Hills. CSU Fullerton serves as the administrative campus for the Consortium. The Consortium operates the Desert Studies Center a 1200 acre site located in the East Mojave Desert. There is a Board of Governors made up of a representative from the seven institutions in the Consortium. There is a Director whose offices are located in McCarthy Hall on the Fullerton campus. There is an on-site staff as well. Baseline budget is provided by the Office of the Chancellor additional revenues comes from grants and from various user fees. The mission of the CDSC is to encourage the understanding and appreciation of California deserts by developing student academic skills and public awareness through a desert studies program this program includes instruction, research and special projects and programs both in and out of the classroom.

The CDSC sponsors an annual symposium of note in desert studies and attracts researchers from all over the country.

The center along with CSU, CSU Fullerton and the Mojave National Preserve entered into a partnership agreement for a proposal to the National Park Service Centennial Challenge Matching Fund to eventually bring the 10KW photovoltaic substation at the facility up to 40KW which would provide the Center with sufficient power to greatly reduce and eliminate the use of diesel generators.

The CDSC has seen a slight decline in its user days and individual users, the drop was attributed to a lack of enrollment in the Extended Education offerings spurred by the downturn in the economy and the price of gasoline. Here is where the Director and the Board will need to provide strategic planning. This notwithstanding, the CDSC continues to be an oasis for research, learning and related activities in the field of desert studies.