

**REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM
CAPACITY AND PREPARATORY REVIEW**

California State University, Fullerton

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Reaffirmation of Accreditation

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The evaluation team in conducting its review was able to evaluate the institution under the WASC Commission Standards and the Core Commitment for Institutional Capacity and therefore submits this Report to the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for action and to the institution for consideration.

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SECTION I. OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of the Institution and Visit

Background information. Now a large, comprehensive university, California State University Fullerton originally was known as Orange County State College. CSUF was established by an act of the California Legislature in 1957, making it the 12th university of what is now a 23-university California State University (CSU) system.

As part of the CSU system, CSUF is subject to the policies of the California Legislature, the CSU Board of Trustees, and executive orders from the office of the CSU Chancellor. In contract negotiations with the CSU system, CSUF faculty are represented by the California Faculty Association and staff by the California State University Employees Union (and other specialized labor organizations).

Governance at CSUF is shared among the university President and the President's administrative staff (including Vice Presidents and College Deans), the Academic Senate (comprised primarily of teaching faculty), Associated Students (a leadership group elected by students), and staff (presently without a formal organization to represent its interests). The President's Administrative Board and Alumni Association Board also advise the president. The President is vested with final decision-making authority.

In fiscal year 2009, CSUF had a total annual operating budget of over \$315 million and, at the end of that fiscal year, an endowment of over \$18 million. In the academic year 2007-2008, approximately 27% of total revenues were derived from student tuition and fees, accounting for 60% of operating revenues.

The main campus of CSUF is situated on 236 acres in Fullerton, 30 miles southeast of Los Angeles. Instruction on this site began in 1960. Eight colleges offer academic programs, and courses are offered on the semester system.

Based on overall student enrollments, CSUF is among the largest universities in the CSU system. In Fall 2008, CSUF had a total undergraduate headcount of 31,428 students (full time equivalent of 24,653 students) and a total graduate headcount of 5,568 students (full time equivalent of 3,154). Approximately half of all students receive financial aid, and a large percentage of undergraduates are transfer students. In addition, almost all CSUF students are commuters, and many are employed full-time or part-time.

In recent years, the ratio of female to male students has been approximately 60:40. In Fall 2008, the student body headcount was approximately 32% white, 28% Hispanic, 22% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 4% African-American, with 10% of the remaining students of unidentified race/ethnicity and about 4% international.

In 2007-2008, CSUF awarded 6,344 bachelor's degrees (BA, BFA, and BS) in 55 fields and 1,328 master's degrees in 50 fields, plus eight credentials and a wide variety of certificates. A new Ed.D. degree will graduate its initial student cohort next year.

In 2006-2007, CSUF employed 835 full-time faculty (approximately 16% of them lecturers) and 1,126 part-time faculty, with the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty varying considerably from department to department. In the five academic year period ending in 2007-2008, CSUF also employed an average of 1,142 full-time staff.

Recent accreditation history. CSUF first received accreditation in 1961 from Western College Association (the precursor of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges). Recent accreditation visits occurred in 1981, 1986, 1990, and 2000. This

year's Capacity and Preparatory Review visit is preliminary to an Educational Effectiveness Review visit.

CPR team visit. The visiting Capacity and Preparatory Review team visited the main campus of CSUF on March 10, 11, and 12. Before the visit, the visiting team read all of the materials supplied by CSUF. During the visit, the visiting team toured the campus; met with and interviewed campus leaders and groups; and heard from faculty, students, and staff at separate open meetings.

Off-campus sites and distance education. CSUF has multiple off-campus locations, the largest of them in Irvine. Two members of the CPR visiting team visited that satellite campus the day before the team visit to the Fullerton campus. CSUF also offers distance education programs. Evaluations of both off-campus sites and distance education are included as appendices and referenced within the body of the report.

Other special issues. Because of the California state budget crisis and its concomitant effects on CSU system funding, the CPR visiting team was asked to address the impact of the state budget crisis on CSUF, particularly with regard to its readiness for the EER visit. In addition, because the state legislative analyst indicated a special interest in the topic, the CPR visiting team also was asked to evaluate the new Ed.D. program, with special concern for its sustainability. Finally, in anticipation of the visit, the Chair and Assistant Chair of the CPR visiting team also participated in a conference call with the Chancellor of the CSU system.

B. Capacity and Preparatory Review Report

Alignment with proposal. The institutional proposal CSUF submitted in October 2007 describes the growth of CSUF and emphasized the challenges of anticipated continued growth. The proposal also identifies three themes for the CPR report: campus-wide planning, student learning and its assessment, and promoting student engagement and success.

The visiting team noted that the CPR report itself is consistent with the proposal in most respects and is organized to address the three proposed themes. However, the state budget crisis led to a change in emphasis from growth to an emphasis upon mandated reductions. As a result, the report addresses the challenges of diminishing resources (including faculty and staff furloughs, with associated campus closures) and system-wide requirements to curtail growth and even impose limits on access (including a ban on admissions in Spring 2010). The reversal in direction from growth to reductions obviously complicated ongoing planning efforts. Staff reductions also may have limited the ability of CSUF to analyze evidence for review. It was helpful for CSUF to foreground its change of circumstances in its report.

Overall quality. The CPR report is well organized and clearly written. It appears to grapple honestly and realistically with the difficult circumstances facing CSUF. Information about the steering committee indicates significant involvement of faculty in preparing the report. The CPR report text, its exhibits, and its appendices demonstrate rigorous inquiry and a well-designed attempt to analyze both the institutional capacity of CSUF and how well its research infrastructure can support its goals for self-evaluation. What the visiting team found to be somewhat unclear from the CPR report is how CSUF will apply its findings to improve its planning and performance.

C. Response to Previous Commission Issues

The CPR report addresses the four recommendations in the WASC 2000 Commission Action Letter explicitly. The first recommendation, “refining the definition and improving evidence of learning,” is responded to by descriptions of data collection, analysis, and planning, although consequential outcomes of those activities are less evident. The second and third recommendations, “continued strengthening of general education” and “improving the program performance review process,” receive more cursory treatment, with the emphasis more upon describing efforts to identify goals and gather information, rather than upon actual “strengthening” and “improvement” activities. The final recommendation, “supporting faculty learning and development,” is covered primarily by referring to the discussion in the 2007 proposal concerning the Faculty Development Center and its programs. All of these four recommendation topics are addressed in Section II of this report.

SECTION II. EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY UNDER THE STANDARDS

Theme 1: Campus-wide Planning

The WASC 2000 Commission Action Letter said relatively little about campus-wide planning, other than to note that the campus has a history of giving planning a high priority. Consistent with this evaluation, CSUF chose campus-wide planning as a theme and, after a rigorous and impressive series of surveys and campus conversations, articulated this challenge:

In the face of enrollment pressures and system-wide expectations, how does each campus unit define and assess indicators of quality and their contributions to the academic mission of the University? How do we integrate and prioritize these indicators of quality with campus-wide planning?

CSUF identified three questions and associated outcomes related to the theme of Campus-Wide Planning; three corresponding taskforces were created.

Outcome 1.1—An institutionalized process to identify and prioritize indicators of quality within the context of enrollment-driven funding. CSUF began with an intent to focus on annual reports and program performance review documents, but switched to linking potential performance indicators of quality to the mission, goals, and strategic plans of the university.

Facilitated at first by an external consultant, the taskforce for this outcome generated a list of performance indicators linked to eight strategic goals of CSUF. The result was a list of over 150 “potential indicators of quality,” varying widely in specificity, from “curriculum” and “campus climate” at the most general, to “student/faculty ratios” and “employment rates of graduates” at the most specific. When the full list of indicators was

submitted to the campus community in a written survey, ten of them were endorsed by more than half of 335 respondents (CFR 4.1). The Interim University Planner developed a grid linking quality indicators, sources of evidence, and responsibilities for collection of data.

The visiting team concluded that, while creating a process for determining how quality will be assessed is a valuable step, it still is not clear how further progress on this outcome will be achieved. If quality indicators are to be useful to the campus, there should be agreement across campus as to their relative importance (CFR 4.1). The quality indicators also should be refined, so that sources of evidence (both quantitative and qualitative) relevant to each indicator are clear and understood and are evaluated for credibility, accuracy, and reliability (CFR 4.3).

Outcome 1.2—A universal assessment of faculty and staff needed to optimize quality as a big university. The WASC Steering Committee had identified three concerns about staffing: sufficient personnel to meet enrollment growth, sufficient faculty commitment to CSUF, and sufficient alignment of personnel policies with institutional purposes. The taskforce for this outcome reviewed a wide array of data, both internal and external. This data included comparisons with other CSU campuses, which indicated no significant differences in non-teaching staff (CFR 3.1). Most recent statistics show that the percentage of tenured or tenure-track faculty, while still under the CSU target of 75%, has increased from just over 50% to 57% since 2005. Gender and ethnic diversity increased as well.

The taskforce recommended prioritizing improved staffing levels, as soon as the state budget crisis might allow. The taskforce also identified a particular need for designated technology staff, which does not appear to have been addressed to date. In addition, the taskforce recommended attention to streamlining and reducing paperwork and bureaucracy, but, again, without reported effects to date. Attention to these recommendations are made especially difficult by the state budget crisis, but the visiting team noted that such attention also may be critical, especially given plans for expansion of programs such as Distance Education.

Outcome 1.3—A “fit/gap analysis” of all current planning processes: where they intersect, what’s missing, and how each one relates to enrollment. A campus survey identified the following planning items as “urgent”: planning for enrollment, balancing enrollment with quality, and integrating planning processes across the spheres of academics, facilities, and budget (CFR 4.2). The University Planning Committee, in existence since 1990, was given the responsibility of carrying out an analysis of all current planning processes “to determine how they intersect and relate to enrollment.” Identified strengths included administrative support and a collegial and inclusive process; concerns included the lack of an “integrated perspective with benchmarks, having too many priorities, and overemphasizing growth” (CFR 4.1).

The group recommended a university-wide strategic planning process as a critical next step (CFR 4.0). Work began on this in the spring of 2009. The latest result of this effort is a document titled, “Rethinking Performance Assessment: From Planning Processes to Performance Measurement,” which takes the current Mission, Goals, and Strategies document for CSUF and attaches the information concerning pertinent quality

indicators, sources of evidence, and responsibilities for collection of data created in connection with Outcome 1.1. The identified next step is for a Strategic Planning taskforce to assist with critical activities of assessing campus performance goals and realities and with developing a preliminary proposal of major strategic initiatives. These activities are intended to lead to a framework for planning groups across campus (CFR 4.1).

Involving the campus community in identifying the most urgent planning priorities should be helpful to CSUF. It is still not clear, however, how the nascent strategic planning process at CSUF will lead to identification of “fits” and “gaps” or how it might help CSUF to address them. This challenge is made more difficult by the state budget crisis, which counters previous assumptions of continuing growth and requires unexpected and unwelcome adjustments. In the past, the campus Planning, Resources, and Budget Committee and the philanthropic board have been most productive in terms of identifying and funding the short-term priorities of the university. However, because strategic planning is by definition a long-range process and the campus faces the need to make more short-term decisions, the visiting team concluded that CSUF now may need to demonstrate its nimbleness and intelligence by devising a new planning paradigm to ensure that it will be able to maintain its mission and integrity in a time of change.

Summary comments. CSUF has engaged in planning efforts that are inclusive, comprehensive, and thorough (CFR 4.5). It has collected an immense amount of data from impressively diverse sources, and it has undertaken a highly democratic process of meaning making (CFR 4.1). Now, there is a critical need to link a “culture of evidence” directly to decision-making (CFR 4.4).

The visiting team observed that for this to lead to substantive change would require an implementation plan based on an articulation of “if/then” causal links, with assumptions about what has to happen in order for these links to occur. The charge to the University Planning Committee to develop a concept map of all planning processes and how those relate to strategic goals should help. In addition, it will be important for this planning process to adapt to changing conditions, economic and otherwise, and urgent for it to identify how recommendations will be acted upon, when, and by whom.

This would counter the tendency at CSUF to over-emphasize process, which was observed by the visiting team. This tendency is exemplified in the agenda for a recent campus-wide planning meeting, one which had been preceded by considerable data collection, planning efforts, and position papers, yet which identified as its goal “to create a context to maximize consensus about the context for making organizational decisions” with the outcome of developing “a catalyst to solicit broader (campus-wide) input.” While notes from this meeting were collected, there has been no further analysis, synthesis, or action.

The University Planning Committee, in the words of one of its members, takes a “global and long term” perspective, as contrasted with the Planning, Resources and Budget Committee, which focuses on short-term decisions. The University Planning Committee “does not plan, but facilitates planning,” said another member. In a no-growth mode such as the one that CSUF faces at present, members see planning as a way for values to filter down into what *not* to do and how the campus should deal with budget cuts: “what is core; what is margin; and how to plan for a come-back.”

It is clear that senior administrators and various planning group members view the various planning activities that have taken place to date as being valuable and necessary. Substantial agreement also exists that planning should lead to difficult decisions about priorities, that these must be connected to the budget, and that planning empowers constituencies, creating a greater sense of self-sufficiency with less dependence on state resources and generating positive energy on campus.

Members of the University Planning Committee insist that the University needs to think differently about the future, that it needs to be more fluid, “work smarter,” and challenge some basic assumptions, such as the definitions of traditional faculty work. This evidences recognition that CSUF cannot just keep planning to plan, which, as the visiting team observed, takes up a great deal of time without corresponding results (CFR 4.1). It would be helpful for CSUF to focus upon what it hopes to accomplish with all of its conversations and reports. For example, the third goal in the Mission, Goals and Strategies for CSUF is to enhance scholarly and creative activity. To address that goal, CSUF would need to identify how to demonstrate and fund such activity as a priority and how to develop evidence of successful achievement. This example relates to the topic of faculty research and development that CSUF does not address significantly in its themes, but that the visiting team feels warrants significant attention in future planning activities (CFR 2.8, 3.4).

The visiting team concluded that developing concrete criteria for making decisions about long-term directions could help CSUF adapt to changing budget realities. For example, staff noted that, even as the campus had grown, the number of building maintenance workers had decreased. Research comparing CSUF plant operations staffing

levels to system-wide or national standards could assist CSUF in making decisions that best protected its interests in times of both contraction and growth (CFR 3.1).

Because the population of Orange County still is growing and CSUF receives several times more applications from potential students than it possibly can handle, an essential function of planning activity may be to keep the campus community engaged and ready for the next growth opportunity (CFR 4.1). Even as the current budget crisis requires adjustments, those adjustments will be most effective if tied directly to a strategic plan.

Theme 2: Student Learning and Its Assessment

The WASC 2000 Commission Action Letter identified student learning and its assessment as an area “useful for further University attention.” The campus WASC Steering Committee selected this theme to guide its inquiry and to address challenges in the area of student learning and assessment. CSUF identified four questions related to the theme of Student Learning and Its Assessment.

Roughly parallel to these questions, five outcomes were established and two taskforces created. The questions and their related learning outcomes deal with areas that the Commission Action Letter identified as “useful for further University attention.”

Outcome 2.1—Identifying student learning goals across the campus. This outcome addresses two areas for attention identified in the Commission Action Letter: first, refining the definition and improving the evidence of student learning and, second, continuing to strengthen General Education. This outcome involves “a central database on the university website designating student learning outcomes for each program,” which is associated with answering the question, “what are the student learning goals that

we hold in common across the baccalaureate degree programs?” A number of processes and plans are in place to achieve this outcome.

With regard to individual courses, instructors are required to state course objectives and learning goals in syllabi. The visiting team observed progress in this area, particularly with respect to anthropology and linguistics courses. Syllabi for courses in these departments consistently included learning goals relevant to coursework; these syllabi were readily available to students on the anthropology department website. Course syllabi for other departments were at different levels of development: some had less clearly defined student learning outcomes and others did not link course assignments and activities with outcomes.

With regard to General Education, a new requirement is for each General Education course syllabus to include learning goals for its relevant General Education category. Also, new General Education goals for student learning were approved by the Academic Senate after a 2007 review of General Education in which faculty, staff, and students all were invited to participate.

With regard to programs and departments, faculty were charged with developing and implementing assessment plans. Also, a central repository on the university website shows student learning goals and Student Learning Outcomes for degree programs. Business and nursing programs evidenced particular progress in developing and making public Student Learning Outcomes at the department and program levels. The business school has an assessment center, and posts on its website not only Student Learning Outcomes, but also assessment reports, an assessment statement, and useful assessment information for both students and educators. On the nursing department website, degree

objectives for both undergraduate and graduate degrees are clearly posted. CSUF now is working to align university-wide Student Learning Outcomes with its mission, goals, and strategies; a document draft is due Spring 2010.

The visiting team concluded that processes and plans in place to achieve this outcome are consistent with CFRs 1.2, 2.3, and 2.4, indicating progress in addressing concerns in the Commission Action Letter regarding the definition of student learning and strengthening General Education. However, it would be helpful to have more information on the processes by which CSUF plans to identify learning goals in common across programs and to align them with the university mission (CFR 1.2). While CSUF reports that “work has begun to align University-wide student learning outcomes with the CSUF “Mission, Goals, and Strategies,” the mechanisms in place to accomplish this work are not articulated.

Outcome 2.2—Identifying and prioritizing indicators of quality. This outcome again addresses the area for attention identified in the Commission Action Letter regarding refining the definition of and improving the evidence of student learning. This outcome involves “an institutionalized process to identify and prioritize indicators of academic and co-curricular quality and link them to resources,” which is associated with answering the question, “how are learning goals articulated and achieved through curricular and co-curricular experiences?”

In accordance with this outcome, indicators of academic and co-curricular quality were identified, including the Academic Affairs Annual Report, Program Performance Reviews, Disciplinary Accreditation, the Student Affairs Annual Report, the Student Affairs Self-Study, and Student Affairs Assessment Committee Reports (CFR 2.11). Also

in line with this outcome, a student affairs assessment committee established a list of student learning domains and is using them to develop department-level learning outcomes, which should enhance reporting on Student Learning Outcome assessment activities in annual reports. Even the Associated Students organization has established learning outcomes for its student leaders and employees. Associated Students offers a prime example of Student Learning Outcomes being used to enhance the student experience: they are now incorporated within student employee position descriptions, employee performance evaluation tools, student staff trainings, training materials for supervisors, departmental discussions, and posters displayed throughout work areas. Finally, in collaboration with Institutional Research and Analytical Studies (CFR 4.5), Student Affairs posted its assessment reports on the Division of Student Affairs website (CFR 1.7).

CSUF has demonstrated that assessments of academic and co-curricular quality are used and incorporated into institutional planning (CFR 4.4, 4.6), in the form of various reports and reviews. Evidence provided suggested to the visiting team that there are widespread efforts to identify indicators of academic and co-curricular quality, strengthen assessment, and increase transparency of assessment results.

Drawing from these efforts, it should be possible to demonstrate how learning goals are actually being achieved through academic and co-curricular experiences and what aspects of the teaching and learning process require additional attention in the forms of institutional support and resources (CFR 4.4, 4.6). In addition, the visiting team observed that information is needed regarding whether there are adequate resources and

appropriate institutional alignment so that resources will support areas identified through assessments as requiring further attention (CFR 3.4, 3.5).

Outcome 2.3—Improving the use of quality review processes to assist departments. This outcome addresses two areas of attention identified in the Commission Action Letter: first, improving the program performance review process (CFR 2.7, 4.4) and, second, supporting faculty learning and development (CFR 3.4). This outcome involves “an infrastructure framework to support and coordinate the work of the individual units in their assessment and improvement of student learning outcomes,” which is associated with answering the question “how can we improve the use of quality review processes such as the program performance reviews, annual reports, and discipline-based accreditation so as to assist departments in assessing student learning and using the results to improve their programs?” Taskforce reviews of these processes were conducted to achieve this outcome.

With regard to program review, CSUF now has a comprehensive and detailed program review procedure with a focus on assessment. There is a seven-year review cycle, based on annual reports. Annual report guidelines were enhanced to require details on assessment practices. To inform the program review process, a data set is given to departments by institutional research. Each department builds a case for its programs, using a common template that includes areas of concern and how each is being addressed. Two external reviewers review each self-study. Departments completing Program Performance Reviews further benefit from a follow-up action letter by the Director of Assessment and Educational Effectiveness, a new position created three years ago. Support also is provided for various institutional stakeholders (such as department

chairs, faculty, and students) to respond to Program Performance Reviews, resulting in a process that is viewed across campus as fair. The visiting team identified various ways in which Program Performance Reviews have been powerful and consequential, including, but not limited to, it having an impact on budget decisions.

With regard to faculty and staff support, new, interactive workshops guide departments through the assessment process. Also, the Faculty Development Center provides further workshops and co-sponsors an annual assessment conference (the visiting team learned that a third to a half of attendees are from CSUF). In addition, an assessment award bestows grants to departments that have improved their assessment plans. Finally, a summer institute on Program Performance Reviews and assessment supports faculty and departments while enhancing communication of successful practices across the campus. The visiting team observed that enhanced quality review processes, along with bolstered faculty and departmental support, evidence a strengthened infrastructure for supporting the work of individual units in their assessment of Student Learning Outcomes.

However, additional information is needed concerning use of the now-fortified assessment infrastructure to improve teaching and learning. Because information is scarce concerning how departments will gain support to enact concrete changes, the visiting team concluded that it would be helpful for CSUF to indicate what plans are in place to assist departments in using assessment results to improve their programs. CSUF also could clarify whether there are adequate resources (CFR 3.5) and support to implement change based on results of assessments. In addition, it was not clear to the visiting team whether newly enhanced quality assurance processes are improving

structures, processes, curricula, and pedagogy (CFR 4.4). Finally, the visiting team observed that it would be helpful for CSUF to demonstrate that leadership at all levels is committed to improvement based on results of inquiry and assessment (CFR 4.6) and that faculty apply results of evaluation toward improvement (CFR 4.6).

Outcomes 2.4 & 2.5—Shared views of and support for effective writing. These outcomes again address the area for attention identified in the Commission Action Letter regarding refining the definition of and improving the evidence of student learning. These outcomes involve “a process involving students and faculty to identify shared views of effective writing within and across disciplines” and “a process involving students and faculty to develop a set of descriptive rubrics for effective writing.” These outcomes address the standard that baccalaureate programs ensure development of core learning abilities and competencies, including college-level written communication (CFR 2.2a). Two writing taskforces have made progress on these outcomes. The taskforces relied on campus-wide input to compile a list of writing outcomes, then developed a set of rubrics to suggest ways of translating an outcomes-based description of shared qualities of effective writing into actual assessment materials. Also, faculty and student surveys were created to assess the outcomes-based description of shared qualities of effective writing, as well as to examine perceptions of effective writing.

CSUF has made progress toward defining and assessing “effective writing skills.” It was not yet clear to the visiting team how CSUF plans to put these definitions, guidelines, and assessment results to work. It could be helpful for CSUF to determine how the information gathered now will be disseminated to and used by both faculty and students, possibly by means of workshops and other writing resources provided by the

student writing center and Faculty Development Center (CFR 3.6). It also could be helpful for CSUF to identify both the measurable impacts it seeks for the teaching and learning of writing skills and the means for achieving such impacts. Budget contractions may affect success in this area, for example, if the position for a Director of Writing in the Disciplines remains unfilled.

Theme 3: Promoting Student Engagement and Success

CSUF identified this theme as important in its proposal, because “questions have been raised about whether we provide consistently adequate and accurate advising that would ‘ensure that all students understand their requirements’ (CFR 2.12) toward their major and toward graduation.” The critical question this theme is attempting to answer is, “how can we better promote student engagement and success through our teaching, mentoring and advising and make the best use of our resources to achieve this objective?” Five outcomes were identified as essential to answering this question, and five corresponding taskforces, all with campus-wide membership, were established to address each outcome separately.

The first three outcomes relate to student advising, and their respective taskforces addressed “the organization and delivery of advisement” (CFR 2.3); whether “students understand the requirements of their academic programs and receive timely, useful and regular information about relevant academic requirements” (CFR 2.12); whether support services are designed to meet student needs (CFR 2.13); and the special issues facing transfer students (2.14).

Outcome 3.1—Student, Faculty and Staff Experiences with Advising. The taskforce for this outcome conducted a campus survey on student perceptions of advising. Prior to

receiving data from this survey, the taskforce made some preliminary recommendations related to enhancing orientation for freshmen and transfer students, improving the tracking process for students changing majors, implementing a campus-wide professional training program for advisors, and encouraging departments to administer student exit surveys (in order to learn more about students' experience with advising in the major). The campus survey, though it had a disappointing response rate of 7% provided the taskforce with additional information and may lead to additional recommendations. The recent CSU priority mandate to improve retention and graduation rates also may affect recommendations. The visiting team concluded that more information and improvements could be critical for a positive evaluation of this outcome.

Outcome 3.2—Professional Development for Advisors. The taskforce for this outcome addressed itself to the stated concern that “the availability and quality of advising services are uneven and fragmented.” CSUF currently offers a continuum of advising options among its colleges, ranging from advising centers with professional advisors to faculty only advisors. There is a related concern that some faculty advisors do not understand the Titan Degree Audit system or know overall graduation requirements.

Therefore, this taskforce was charged with developing a professional development program for advisors. Progress has been made with the creation of an Academic Advising Certificate in Excellence program and an updated Blackboard learning community for advisors. Other recommendations, such as forming an Advisor Professional Development Committee and a university-wide study of graduation deferrals, have not yet happened. The Academic Advising Center handles General Education advising, along with probation and dismissal proceedings for undergraduate students. The visiting team noted

the importance of the Academic Advising Center both in offering these services and in offering training to advisors.

Outcome 3.3—Titan Degree Audit system. A Taskforce was created to investigate whether the Titan Degree Audit system implemented in 2008 is being used across campus, whether it is accurate, whether students know how to use it, and how it might be improved.

While more students are aware of the Titan Degree Audit system and while advisors have worked hard to encourage its use, advisors indicated to the visiting team that problems with the system remain. The visiting team concluded that there is a continuing need for training of advisors and students; that the non-academic wording included in the system can be confusing to both advisors and students; and that the exception process still takes a long time, which can lead to inaccurate information on the system. Along with faculty and professional advisors, the visiting team recognized that the Titan Degree Audit system is an important advising tool and needs to be robust, accurate, and widely used by both students and advisors.

Outcome 3.4—Assessment of Academic and Co-Curricular Student Engagement. The taskforce for this outcome concerned itself with the National Survey of Student Engagement, which CSUF implemented in order to identify “the characteristics of its students and assess their needs, experiences and levels of satisfaction” (CFR 2.10). This survey was administered in spring 2009 to 5,000 students equally divided between freshmen and seniors, with an overall response rate of 37%. From data provided on the results of this survey, it is notable that scores in the areas of Enriching Educational Experiences and of Supportive Campus Environment lagged behind scores of peer

institutions. The visiting team concluded that these specific topics and the use of all of the results of this survey merit significant further attention.

Outcome 3.5—Compendium of Student-Faculty Research and Scholarship. The taskforce for this outcome created an expanded annual compendium of faculty research that also would include student-faculty research activities and collaborations (CFR 2.9, 2.10, 2.11). Data was compiled from annual reports, research and creative activities, grants and reports from colleges. The taskforce also made a series of recommendations to encourage or highlight student-faculty research and scholarship, which was noted as an outstanding issue by the visiting team, because these recommendations remain to be implemented.

Transition from theme taskforces to new committees. In the future, the five separate taskforces for the outcomes of this theme will be superseded by two permanent committees. One of these, named the Advisor Professional Development Committee, will be developed by a task force that will create an improved advisement system. When the new committee is formed, it will be charged with supporting the already-established Blackboard community for advisors. The other new committee, already established and named the Student Academic Life Committee, will review the data collected concerning student-faculty research and scholarship and the recommendations of the associated taskforce, then will make recommendations to the President's Administrative Board on strategies to improve graduation rates and students' research opportunities and co-curricular experiences. This committee also will analyze the results of the National Survey of Student Engagement for CSUF, in order to ensure that this assessment data is disseminated widely on campus and used to improve services to students. This committee

will be responsible for whatever strategies the campus elects to implement in all of these areas.

Summary comments. The visiting team concluded that much remains to be done with regard to this theme. The overarching question the campus sought to answer is a rather broad one related to student engagement. However, most of the outcomes in the CSUF's CPR report address primarily the more limited topic of advising, rather than other topics identified in its CPR proposal, which include assessing the extent and ways in which CSU Fullerton students engage in the academic and co-curricular aspects of the campus. With regard to all of the issues in this theme, it will be important to go beyond taskforce investigations and changes to also implement recommendations.

Special topic: Ed.D. sustainability

The visiting team concluded that the Ed.D. program at CSUF is sustainable. CSUF received support from CSU to launch this program as one among the few in the first wave of Ed.D. offerings the the system approved, and CSU continues to support CSUF offering this degree. In addition, the specialized areas of study that CSUF has chosen are well designed to address market niche opportunities, so, as a result, student demand and enrollment are robust. CSUF demonstrated nimbleness in scaling up the new program quickly and in obtaining financing to help it to become self-sustaining over time. The program leadership is engaged, its faculty well qualified, and its students screened to be prepared for the demands of doctoral-level work and for success after earning the degree. The support of the administration of CSUF for this program seems both enthusiastic and justified, and that should help to ensure its long-term viability.

Special topic: Effects of the economic recession

Along with other universities in the state and across the country, CSUF has been adversely affected by the economic recession, an external influence that it obviously cannot control. Along with other universities within the CSU system, CSUF has experienced budget cuts and system-wide mandates that required it not to rehire some temporary employees (including some lecturer faculty); to reduce student admissions (including all Spring 2010 admissions); to adjust the number of class sections offered while also increasing some class sizes; to accommodate faculty and staff furloughs; and to make various policy changes. While CSUF has had some areas in which it could use operational discretion in responding to impacts of the economic recession, there was no way to avoid it having a significant short-term impact, including delaying progress in meeting goals established for the WASC review. The visiting team concluded that the long-term forecast, especially for CSU, is not yet clear enough to confirm whether the budget-related challenges that CSUF currently faces will, over time, constitute a “new normal” for the university. If that were to be the case, CSUF probably would need to reconsider some of its ambitions, especially with regard to enrollment growth, increased hiring of tenure-track faculty, and other forms of expansion.

SECTION III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commendations

- The commitment of faculty and staff to students is very strong.
- There is an outstanding sense of community: people enjoy working at CSUF and students like being at CSUF.
- There is progressive use of technology and library services. Examples include the fiber optic network, smart classrooms, the computer refresh program, and the faculty information portal.
- There is excellent cross-divisional, cross-college, and cross-department collaboration, exemplified in the joint leadership of numerous taskforces.
- There is a strong, emerging curricular and co-curricular assessment program, including a widely used student involvement outcomes program for student leaders.
- CSUF is nimble in its responsiveness, taking advantage of opportunities as they arise, often being ahead of the curve as an institution. Examples include the early offering of an Ed.D. program, reviving the nursing program, development of the distance learning program, and the commitment to finding the best home for a continuing campus presence in southern Orange County.
- The physical plant has vastly improved since the last WASC visit, and more buildings are on the way, which takes years of planning. Examples of successful new building projects completed include the Mihaylo business building, the student recreation center, and the library addition. Other projects in progress include a new parking structure and additional student housing.

- CSUF has demonstrated an impressive commitment to diversifying the student community. For example, the proportion of African-American male students is higher than that in the surrounding community, and the president also recently has launched a new initiative for recruiting male students.
- There is wide accessibility of data, both statistical and financial, at CSUF, along with a largely democratic budget process that promotes transparency and open debate.

Recommendations

Leadership and organizational culture. Although a culture of transactional leadership, participative consensus, and opportunistic growth permeates the campus, and while there is an expressed intention to pursue transformational change, new financial realities may require new approaches for effecting meaningful transformation over the long term. The university should examine both its formal institutional structures for decision-making and its actual decision-making practices in light of its mission and vision, to ensure that it can effectively and systematically address competing needs with full and appropriate participation.

Planning. Although community-building cross-disciplinary collaborations have devoted considerable time and efforts to campus planning activities, a great deal of time and effort is spent on developing data sets and collecting evidence that is not always used. The campus should become more clear about what it wants its planning to accomplish and to prioritize actions and results, tying its goals to performance indicators and the budget-allocation process.

Research and development. Although the research mission of the university is evidenced by grant applications and tenure policies, and while policies favoring training and development for staff, advisors, and other faculty are in place, short-term strategies such as low overhead grant applications, reductions of release time, and reduction of training services may compromise effectiveness in these areas. The university should develop long-term strategies for effectively strengthening these areas in order to maintain infrastructure, support recruitment, and encourage retention of qualified faculty and staff.

Assessment and Student Learning Outcomes. Although the university has made progress in developing learning objectives for degree programs and General Education; has identified indicators of academic and co-curricular quality; has designed learning outcomes for program performance review; has established rubrics for evaluating student writing across the curriculum; and has expanded support for training faculty in assessment, these activities are not always explicitly and consistently aligned with the university's mission, and, in some cases, have not been fully implemented. The university should expand its focus on defining and communicating outcomes for student learning across all departments and courses, and it should move its processes forward, so that those outcomes can be accomplished and reviewed effectively.

Advising. Although the campus recognizes the importance of undergraduate advising and has used the capacity and preparatory review process to implement ambitious internal review activities involving multiple taskforces, undergraduate advising remains fragmented and uneven, and many recommendations have not yet been implemented. The university should clarify what it has achieved from its efforts to date,

prioritize recommendations based on their impact on student retention and graduation, complete the most critical steps, and collect evidence on their effectiveness.

Resource management. Although the university has been laudably protective of existing permanent staff, it currently has problematic staffing gaps and temporary arrangements, and some programs not externally or specially funded have experienced cuts that affect critical performance. The university should ensure that, based on its core principles and values, it continuously monitors needs in all areas and prioritizes the continuity of services and support most consistent with its mission, should that be necessary.

Readiness for the Educational Effectiveness Review. While the university demonstrates thoughtfulness about WASC standards, in some areas the documentation provided to date addresses primarily intentions. The university should ensure that, in its next WASC review, it will be able to conclusively document results.

SECTION IV. PREPARATIONS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

CSUF already had begun preparing for the EER before the CPR visit, following the thematic approach articulated in its 2007 institutional proposal and continued in its CPR report. This advance preparation speaks well to the university's commitment. However, because impacts of the state budget crisis both changed some of important premises of planning for CSUF and reduced the time that faculty and staff have had available to prepare for the EER, CSUF is requesting delay in the EER visit: from 18 months after the CPR visit to 24 months. If furloughs and/or faculty/staff reductions continue beyond the current academic year, the time pressure is likely to continue or possibly even worsen.

To prepare for Theme 1, "campus-wide planning," CSUF has an active Campus-Wide Planning Taskforce led by the Director of University Planning. The goal and expectation of this taskforce is to have a campus strategic plan discussed, developed, and finalized before the EER visit, ideally with some elements of that plan already in process and a clear approach to responsive decision-making in place. However, budget cuts affecting enrollment planning may negatively affect this work. CSUF also may be subject to CSU system-wide mandates that may supplant CSUF decision-making.

To prepare for Theme 2, "student learning and its assessment," CSUF plans to significantly expand its efforts, but this might require resources that now may be scarce. It is unclear what aspects of these efforts may be affected by funding cutbacks and what the priorities of CSUF may be in this regard. Of particular interest at this point are expanding efforts for consistent evidence of learning across all courses and departments; ensuring the transparency of assessment results; communicating results to the campus

population; and both determining and shaping the impacts on teaching and learning. This would involve examining how data can be used to maximize effects on teaching and learning in line with course, program, and institutional goals.

To prepare for Theme 3, “promoting student engagement and success,” CSUF has major plans with regard to advising, intending to enhance the professional development and support system for advisors. However, given that some or all of these initiatives may be curtailed because of the state budget crisis, it may be important for CSUF to clarify what already has been achieved, prioritize goals and outcomes, and select for completion those that might have the most significant effect on student retention and graduation rates. With regard to how students engage in the academic and co-curricular aspects of the campus, CSUF does not have as well developed plans for new initiatives, which will be important for documenting progress in this area.

More generally, while CSUF appears to have a sound infrastructure of administrators, staff, facilities, and technical resources, obviously, whether the university will be fully prepared for the EER may depend considerably on external influences. To be adequately prepared may require some shifting of priorities (including regarding expansion of the off-site locations and/or distance learning initiatives). A further question is the possibility of changes in critical leadership positions, which might affect priorities and momentum.

A final influence upon readiness remains under the control of CSUF, and that is whether the university applies its resources not just to study and visioning, but also to actually effecting changes based on what it learns from research and planning efforts. By

the time of the EER, there should be evidence of improved performance in all three areas identified as themes by CSUF.

REPORT ON OFF-CAMPUS PROGRAMS

Institution

California State University, Fullerton

Site location

Irvine Campus
7320 Trabuco Road
Irvine, CA 92618

Team members/reviewers

Marc Levis-Fitzgerald and Jane Lawrence

Context

The Irvine campus offers upper division, bachelor's degree completion programs and graduate programs, mainly in education and business. Classes are offered on the site, as well as online and through interactive video classes. For budget reasons, enrollment was reduced this past academic year. In fall 2009, 2,714 students enrolled in at least one course at the Irvine campus.

Date visited and length of visit

March 9, 2010; 10:00-2:30

Visited in conjunction with

CPR review

Description of on-site interactions

Reviewers met with the Dean of the Irvine campus as well as with academic, student affairs, and administrative leadership; faculty who teach at the Irvine campus (no FTEs are assigned there); and students. An open forum was held so that anyone on the campus could provide comments and feedback to the reviewers.

Other materials reviewed

The campus provided extensive materials and reports, including a January 2010 report completed by a taskforce charged by the senior administration of CSUF, in consultation with the Academic Senate, to review the Irvine campus.

Suggested Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	Follow-up needed
Quality of the Learning Site. Is the physical environment and academic infrastructure of the site conducive to the fostering of learning and dialogue between faculty and students? (CFRs 2.1, 2.5, 3.5)	Campus buildings are leased annually from the Lennar Corp. The uncertainty of the lease and knowledge that the campus will need to be relocated in the near future make it difficult for campus leadership to plan. The present site is adequate to provide the programs and services that the campus currently offers.	X
Student Support Services. What is the site's capacity for providing advisement, counseling, library, computing services and other appropriate student services? (CFRs 2.13, 3.6)	Campus currently provides academic counseling, library resources, IT support, admissions, and financial aid services to students. A challenge is that the Irvine campus dean does not have budget control over some staff who can see their time reduced by units on the main campus. In addition, students are paying a student services and health fee, but they are not getting many of the services available on the Fullerton campus. Highest priorities for services are: career services, learning center, food services, and disability services.	X
Connection of Students and Faculty to the Institution. How visible and deep is the presence of the home campus (or broader institution) at the off-campus site? (CFR 2.10)	CSU Fullerton faculty or adjuncts teach the courses at the Irvine campus, but the Irvine campus dean has no control over the faculty who teach or the courses that are taught. It appears, however, that the Irvine campus attempts to make students feel part of CSUF and many students take courses on both campuses.	X
Relationship of institution's goals for CPR/EER Reviews to off-campus activities. In what ways, if any, do the institution's efforts to build capacity and enhance educational effectiveness through the reaffirmation process on the home campus carry over to activities at this site? (CFRs 4.1, 4.8)	The Irvine campus is not represented on the WASC Steering Committee. The reviewers' visit was the first time the campus has been part of the accreditation process. Because the Irvine campus does not control academic offerings or faculty, it may not be able to participate in the EER process.	X

Suggested Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	Follow-up needed
Context of this site in the broader institution. How does the institution conceive of this site relative to its mission, other current and potential remote sites, and administrative structure? How is this operationalized? (CFRs 1.2, 3.1, 3.8)	The President and the Vice President for Academic Affairs are supportive of having a campus in southern Orange County. The January 2010 taskforce report includes a series of recommendations that need to be addressed to clarify the relationship of the Irvine campus to the main campus, educationally, programmatically, and financially.	X
Educational Effectiveness Preparedness. How has the institution organized itself to address student learning and educational effectiveness at this site? What are the quality and nature of institutional data analysis systems, quality improvement systems and systems to evaluate student learning at this site? (CFRs 4.6, 4.7)	Assessments are conducted for courses offered at CSUF Irvine, but the administration has no direct control over courses offered or over the faculty assigned to teach. The university needs to begin to develop the capacity to collect and analyze information on student learning that are specific to the Irvine campus. This will allow the university to do comparative analysis on students at both campuses and should include both indirect and direct methods of assessment.	X

Additional Findings, Observations, or Comments

CSUF Irvine is the largest off-site campus in the CSU. Many efforts are being made to ensure retention leading to graduation for Irvine students. The taskforce report on the Irvine campus, issued in January 2010, is very thorough. The taskforce concludes that the establishment, maintenance, and future growth of the Irvine campus are justified. The taskforce endorses providing the Irvine campus with FTEs to directly support instruction. More needs to be done, however, with assessment of student learning on Irvine campus students. In addition, for the campus to fulfill its educational mission to the students it serves, issues of space (finding a permanent location for the campus), academic resources, and student services will need to be addressed.

REPORT ON DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Institution

California State University, Fullerton

Team members/reviewers

Jon Wergin and Carol Terry

Dates distance education materials were viewed

March 2010

Viewed in conjunction with

CPR visit

Context

CSUF began offering distance education courses ten years ago. Fall 2008 data reports 131 courses with 6,252 students enrolled.

There are three cohort graduate degree programs: Master of Science in Information Technology, Master of Science in Software Engineering, and Master of Science in Instructional Design and Technology. In addition, CSUF Distance Education offers certificates in nine programmatic areas: Business, Computers; Database Administration and Development; Education; Expert Witness; Fiduciary Management; Forensic Science; Insurance/Healthcare; Lean Enterprise; and Pharmaceutical.

Students must apply and be admitted to the cohort programs and must meet typical entrance requirements.

Description of distance education interactions

Data provided by CSUF for the CPR visit was reviewed. Information was gathered from various interviews during the CPR visit.

Other materials reviewed or persons interviewed concerning distance education

The distance education website was reviewed and a video demonstration of an example online course was viewed. In addition, an interview with a CSUF student in an online cohort program was conducted, and actual online courses were viewed through the student's campus portal and Blackboard.

		F o l l o w - u p n e e d e d
Suggested Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	
Quality of the Learning Infrastructure. Is the learning platform and academic infrastructure of the site conducive to the fostering of learning and dialogue between faculty and students? (CFRs 2.1, 2.5, 3.5)	Each course starts with a “boot camp”: an in-person, on-campus orientation for students at which instructors and students meet and get to know each other. The course syllabus, posted on Blackboard, notes course objectives, learning goals, required text, assignments, due dates, and test taking information, as well as other information pertinent to the student and the course. The typical formats for course interaction between student and instructor are Blackboard and email, which the instructor can use to provide a summary of course content and to provide assignments. Weekly exchanges between the instructor and students typically are mandatory. There also may be two or three on-campus classes. If a team project is involved, students may telephone conference call and/or email each other regarding the assignment. Although the Distance Education “Online Course Demonstration” presents a video of an instructor giving a class lecture, it is not known how common that mode of delivery actually is. In four courses that were viewed by the visiting team, the “lecture” was delivered in the form of a text summary provided by the instructor. There was little evidence of techniques specifically designed to foster interactivity and a sense of online presence for distance learning students. The course format on Blackboard differs from course to course and instructor to instructor. In addition, although instructors may share their background and credentials information with students	X

		F o l l o w - u p n e e d e d
Suggested Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	
	at boot camp, instructor credentials are not provided consistently online.	
Student Support Services. What is the institution's capacity for providing advisement, counseling, library, computing services and other student services appropriate to the modalities of delivery? (CFRs 2.13, 3.6)	Student services are explained during the boot camp and information about them is posted on the web. Students are not trained in the use of technology, but the help desk will respond, typically within 24 hours. Occasional "I'm here to help" help desk messages are pushed to students throughout the course. In addition, former students may offer tips and information to new students. Robust library services are available online if the student takes the initiative to learn the process and use the resources. Other services, such as financial aid and advising are available via phone or email.	
Connection of Faculty to the Institution. In what ways does the institution ensure that distance learning faculty are oriented, supported, and integrated appropriately into the academic life of the institution? How are faculty involved in curriculum development and assessment of student learning? (CFRs 3.1, 3.2)	CSUF administrators have stated the importance of enhancing distance education as a means to reach more of their student population. CSUF has established a one-stop instructional design and multimedia production unit to assist faculty in the development, delivery, and maintenance of their online courses. Distance Education also provides online resources for faculty regarding online learning, including development of the course, assessment of the learning, etc.	
Relationship of institution's goals for CPR/EER Reviews to distance learning activities. In what ways, if any, do the institution's efforts to build capacity and enhance educational effectiveness through the reaffirmation process on the home campus carry over to	Although Distance Education is not a focus of the CPR report, it is clear that Distance Education is important to CSUF. CSUF has established a development support center to encourage and support faculty to pursue online course development. An administrator of the campus stated that growth in distance education was an important way of providing additional access to students, especially because of space and parking	

		F o l l o w - u p n e e d e d
Suggested Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	
distance learning activities? (CFRs 4.1, 4.8)	issues on the campus.	
Context of distance learning to the broader institution. How does the institution conceive of distance learning relative to its mission, other current and potential remote sites, and administrative structure? How is this operationalized? (CFRs 1.2, 3.1, 3.8)	CSUF views distance education as an integrated part of its academic program. Blackboard is used to present the course syllabus, student learning outcomes, daily assignments, etc. for both campus-based and distance education online-based courses. Visiting team members were told by one CSUF contact that, because of this commitment to use Blackboard in all courses, it does not take a lot of additional effort to create an online course. There is a need to evaluate the extent to which this philosophy prevails, because it does not recognize the need for specialized course designs for online learning.	X
Educational Effectiveness Preparedness. How has the institution organized itself to address student learning and educational effectiveness for distance learners? What are the quality and nature of institutional data analysis systems, quality improvement systems and systems to evaluate student learning in distance learning courses and programs? (CFRs 4.6, 4.7)	Instructors are flexible by providing off-site testing at instructor-approved sites. Distance learning classes are evaluated by similar means as other classes. However, CSUF does not have a systematic and recurring method in place for disaggregating and analyzing distance learning assessment data in comparison to that for classroom-based courses.	X

		F o l l o w - u p n e e d e d
Suggested Lines of Inquiry	Observations and Findings	
Verification of Student Identity. What procedures does the institution have in place to ensure that the student who registers in a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit? Does the institution make clear in writing that these processes protect student privacy and notify students at the time of registration or enrollment of any projected additional costs associated with the verification procedures? (CFRs 1.7, 1.8)	The instructor meets directly with the student in the required boot camp and in any other on-site class meetings. Students participate in most classes by logging in through the CSUF student portal. For off-site testing, the instructor approves the person proctoring the exam and the testing facility. The professor sends the exam to the proctor and the proctor asks the student to produce an identification card. The issues of student privacy notification and costs were not addressed.	X

Additional Findings, Observations, or Comments

The University's commitment to distance education and to enhancing delivery methods for online courses was confirmed in Fall 2009, when the Online Academic Strategies and Instructional Support facility was established to support faculty with the development, delivery, and maintenance of online courses.

CSUF plans to create more than a dozen online undergraduate and graduate programs over the next four years. If and as CSUF responds to suggestions for creating a comprehensive syllabus for all of its courses, it would be appropriate to include distance education courses.

