

CAPACITY AND PREPATORY REVIEW

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

Serving a Changing Region: Advancing as a Learning-Centered University

When we wrote our Institutional Proposal in the Fall of 2007, we only briefly discussed the “interplay between constraints on public financial support for education and the ...needs of our students.” We recognized the many challenges that CSUN was facing: changing demographics, changing regional needs, changing public attitudes about higher education (include data here highlighting changes since 2000). But we also felt confident that we were well on the way to successfully addressing these challenges. In 2007, California—along with the nation in general—was looking at a much different reality than currently exists. The housing bubble had not yet exploded and throughout the state and across the nation people speculated on property in anticipation of fast and easy returns. The national economy had not yet begun its meltdown and Wall Street millionaires and billionaires were living large. Bernie Madoff was still a hero to many. California State University was experiencing continued enrollment growth and CSUN’s Master Plan anticipated 35,000 FTES by 2035.

What a difference two years can make.

In 2009, over two million homes are in foreclosure, leading financial institutions have collapsed or been bailed out by the government, Bernie Madoff is in prison, and the CSU system is facing a \$584 million budget reduction—and a serious decrease in the number of students we will be able to educate over the next two years. Faculty, staff and administrators have all been “furloughed” for 2008/09 to help offset the cuts. Not surprisingly, the optimism which infused our Institutional Proposal has been dealt a serious blow and a shared anxiety characterizes the campus.

And yet, there are also reasons to be hopeful. In 2008, this country elected a new President who has vowed to support education and who is putting money behind his promise. The economy is, as we write this, showing faint signs of resuscitation—although admittedly least in California. As an institution, California State University, Northridge remains committed to the same goals that were operative two years ago.

In her 2009 Convocation Address, President Koester expressed confidence. “My optimism stems from understanding—knowing—that Cal State Northridge has already made critical changes that allow us to respond effectively to the current fiscal situation and other major issues affecting all U.S. public higher education. While it is difficult—very difficult—at times like these to focus on other than the “here and now,” it is to the future that we must attend.” She went on to affirm CSUN’s commitment to providing access to higher education for students in our region, to being a learning-centered university, to student success and academic excellence. Dr. Koester closed her address by reminding the campus community that this “...University is familiar with, and has overcome, difficulty. And, we can, will, and must stand together to protect the future.” <http://www.csun.edu/presofc/speeches/2009convocation.html>

This reaffirmation of our learning-centeredness is supported by the distances we’ve traveled in the last decade, from “Becoming a Learning-Centered University” in 2000 to “Advancing as a Learning-Centered University,” the subtitle of our Institutional Proposal for this reaccreditation. We committed to being learning centered many years ago; you can now find it interwoven through most of our practices and programs. Thus, when the WASC Steering Committee thought about how to approach the reaccreditation process, we again took a learning-centered approach. Working with the University

community, we selected and designed the three themes so that all would be addressed as research questions. We saw this process as an opportunity to learn about our institution. As we said in our IP, we believe that “teaching and learning are subjects worthy of sophisticated study.” As a result, you will see that the three essays that comprise the CPR self study have each been written by a Research Team that spent the last eighteen months investigating these research questions. You will find that each essay has its own unique voice—though we believe that all three voices speak coherently to one another.

The first thematic essay addresses CSUN’s commitment to student success. Here the team addresses how students learn, both in their academic courses and outside the classroom. We examine the processes and structures we have put in place to support student learning—advisement, technology, retention efforts and assessment—and how these have changed over time. The second essay examines the ways in which the University supports faculty and staff success and the ways in which faculty and staff, in turn, support university success. Aspects of support include University commitment to faculty and student research, faculty and staff development opportunities, recruitment and retention of a diverse employee pool, and University efforts to generate external support for faculty, staff and student success. Our last essay focuses on how we learn as an institution. This Research Team involved graduate students in the process so that the WASC process itself became a learning opportunity for all involved. This essay examines three major initiatives undertaken by CSUN over the last decade to understand what factors contributed to their success and how that success can become a model for future endeavors.

Essay One: Student Success through Engagement in Learning

Our proposal laid out 4 areas of inquiry: Student Advisement and Communication, Learning in GE and the Major, Learning outside the Classroom, and Dimensions of Retention. In Spring 08, a Research Team of 15 members with representation from across the institution began work on the questions of Theme 1 in relation to the CPR report. The Theme 1 research team assigned team members to subgroups responsible for specific task within the Theme 1. The research team met once monthly to hear from key stake holder, to hear subgroup report on progress and to discuss next steps.

The four parts of the essay cover the four areas of inquiry. Throughout the essay technology and the learning-centered university play dominant roles.

Student Advisement and Communication

In 2000, WASC recommended that the campus pay attention to graduation and retention rates. In response, a Graduation Rate Task Force (GRTF) was formed in 2001 and presented its report to President Koester in 2003 (see also Essay 3). The report identified advising as an area of concern. As a result, CSUN has been improving student advisement and communication about advising policies and procedures through coordinated efforts across divisions of the University. Each of CSUN's eight Colleges shares the common mission of "assisting students in forming intentional partnerships that connect their needs, values, abilities and goals to CSUN's educational program." All Colleges view academic advising as an on-going relationship and a collaborative process that helps students identify and reach their academic objectives through use of a wide variety of campus personnel and resources. **(CFR 4.1)**

Rather than a centralized process, each of CSUN's eight Colleges has its own Student Service Center/EOP Satellite (SSC/EOP). Colleges vary in how they advise the various categories of students they serve, but as a general rule, there are two levels of advisement. Lower division students and students in academic jeopardy are primarily advised in the SSC/EOP offices, while upper division students in good academic standing are primarily advised by faculty or staff specialists in their majors. This decentralized and tiered model provides several advantages: proximity to academic departments; heightened levels of collaboration between faculty and staff advisors; more focused and deeper relationships between advisors and advisees; and specialization of advisors according to students' class, academic standing and desired career paths. Even with improved infrastructure, the model led to some confusion among students, faculty and staff advisers, about the "who, what, when and where" of advising and support services. The University responded to this challenge in several ways.

First, in 2005, President Koester convened the Academic Advising Reconciliation Committee (AARC), comprised of representatives from Undergraduate Studies, Student Affairs and the Educational Opportunity Program to coordinate information and policies across the University, organize efficient and consistent processes, communicate these policies and processes to students and bring CSUN's advising policies and procedures in line with national best practices.

Second, the AARC responded to these concerns by setting university-wide standards for levels and types of services, communicating these standards to students in a clear manner, developing technology tools for use by advisors and students, conducting professional development workshops for both staff and faculty advisors and creating and implementing an advising assessment plan. Cumbersome policies were

reviewed and improved with the approval of faculty governance and uniform forms and procedures are now used by all Colleges. **(CFR 4.2)**

Third, for the past several years, the Associate Deans of each College have taken responsibility for assuring both the quality of advisement in their own Colleges and achieving consistency across all Colleges. Associate Deans now make or approve all decisions regarding advisement services and the academic standing of students. They meet regularly to discuss policies, coordinate responses and assure consistency through mechanisms such as the Appeals Board, which meets weekly to review contested decisions on student petitions.

Fourth, there have been major improvements in advisement processes. In the past, services offered to different categories of students (i.e., new freshmen, new transfers, continuing upper division students) varied greatly depending on the College. **(CFR 4.4)**

To reduce the impact of these variables, beginning in late 2006, the advising leadership began developing the "Baseline Services" grid (see Appendix). This document lays out, in an easy to read format, the "who, what, when & where" of advising. The document relates what every student at CSUN, regardless of major or class level, can expect to receive in terms of academic advising and other holistic support services delivered by the SSC/EOP and ARC/EOP offices. The document reflects a minimum level of service that will be supported by all areas, but does not proscribe the offering of additional services by individual offices, departments, programs or Colleges. The creation of the document involved not just a cataloging of services, but over a year of negotiating what those services should be, and what level of service can be supported by all areas. **(CFR 1.2, 1.7, 2.10, 2.11, 2.13, & 2.14)**

Following the creation of the Baseline Services Grid, a group of SSC/EOP Directors, advisors and administrators began to develop an assessment plan for academic advisement. Learning outcomes were developed for students in all stages of matriculation. Data gathering is set to begin in Fall 2009. A *Student Guide to Academic Advisement at California State University* was developed, partially in response to requests from Associated Students, CSUN's student government. **(CFR 1.2, 2.3, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13, & 2.14)**

Several new programs for First Time Freshmen, including accelerated timetables for testing and registration and expanded night and weekend advisement hours across campus started in response to the advisement and registration problems that often occurred in summer. Transfer students, too, received special attention to improve their orientation and advisement. Six sections of popular upper division General Education courses were reserved for them, and these classes combine traditional course materials with information about campus resources, services and expectations. Student Affairs began an aggressive program of outreach to provide advisement to transfer students at the local community college they are now attending.

The majority of student advisement at the upper division occurs in the major and is provided by faculty. Undergraduate Studies holds two training sessions each semester for faculty advisors and many Colleges supplement these sessions with their own professional development workshops run by College advisors. A Faculty Colloquium on Advising, co-sponsored by the Faculty Senate and Undergraduate Studies, was held during the 2007-2008 academic year to emphasize the importance of this activity. In addition, because informal advising is offered by the staff of units throughout the University, Undergraduate Studies prepares policy guides and conducts workshops each year for newly hired faculty, department chairs, new student orientation leaders and the staff of Admissions & Records, among others. Finally,

there have been numerous collaborative efforts across divisional lines to improve websites, printed material and electronic communications addressed to many subgroups of students as discussed above.

Graduate student advisement is primarily provided by faculty in the student's home department. These advisors are assisted by a departmental graduate coordinator, who is the liaison with Graduate Studies, in order to provide updated and ongoing information about policies and procedures to students. **(CFR 2.2b, 2.12, & 2.13)**

To further address some of the concerns raised by Associated Students about advisement, including its desire for 24-7 advising, the University developed an interactive technology tool, named "Ask Matty" (<http://www.csun.edu/askmatty/>) based on the University's mascot. This online service is offered collaboratively through Student Outreach and Recruitment Services (SOAR) in the division of Student Affairs and Undergraduate Studies, and is intended for prospective and current students and other website visitors. Students can type in any question and the system searches for key words to provide answers. Common questions include: "Where do I go for academic advisement?"; "How do I change majors?"; "Who can I talk to about getting an internship?" If Matty's answer does not meet the student's need, the student is directed to type in a question that is sent directly to the "Ask Matty" staff, who then research and formulate a personal response within one or two business days and respond back via e-mail. The new question and answer are then added to the question bank. CSUN's "Ask Matty" has become a model for universities across the nation and its production team was selected to present at an annual conference this year. Since its launch in October 2008, "Ask Matty" has received around 25,000 hits from current students and another 25,000 hits from prospective students. The program includes a massive directory of keywords and more than 600 updated answers to the most frequently asked questions by students. **(CFR 2.11, 2.12, 2.13, 2.14)**

The University also has developed procedures to assure that new freshman and transfer students receive critical advising information at strategic points of contact. Admissions and Records, SSC/EOP centers, and SOARS coordinate the development and distribution of a variety of print, electronic and web communications that explain necessary registration components and actions including placement testing, Financial Aid, housing, initial academic advising, checklists of critical actions, new student orientation, etc. **(CFR 1.7, 2.3, 2.12, & 2.13).**

Further, we are assessing the efficacy of our communications with students at co-curricular events such as admissions yield events in the Living Learning Communities and New Student Orientation, as well as online surveys following various forms of written communication with students and parents. **(CFR 1.7, 2.3, 2.10, 2.11, & 2.13)**

In the last several years, the University has developed four user-friendly advisement tools that use technology to help promote progress towards degree completion. These tools include 4-year Degree Plans, the Degree Progress Report (DPR), and My Academic Planner (MAP).

- Four-Year Degree Plans - Every academic department in the University has created detailed, semester-by-semester plans of what courses students need to pass to complete the major, options and specializations. Four-year plans were developed for incoming freshmen and two year plans for incoming transfer students. (<http://www.csun.edu/anr/plans/>) **(CFR 2.2a)**
- Degree Progress Reports (DPR) - DPRs facilitate student program planning by providing detailed and comprehensive real-time evaluation of all courses and requirements that have been and

need to be completed in order to attain a degree. The system gives students the ability to run “what if” scenarios if they are considering a change of major **(CFR 2.12, and 2.14)**

- “My Academic Planner (MAP) – MAP allows students to enter courses planned for future semesters into an online planner and then check to see if their choices will complete all graduation requirements. In the future, it is anticipated that academic departments could utilize the information entered by students in the MAPs to plan course offerings to better meet demand. **(CFR 2.11, 2.13, and 2.14)**

For the EER we will assess these tools and their impact on advisement, time to graduation, units at graduation and retention.

Learning in GE and the Major

At California State University, Northridge each of our approximately 58 academic departments/programs has well-established program assessment plans which specify Goals and Student Learning Outcomes with aligned Course Objectives. Annual Program Assessment Reports show that many programs specify similar goals and student learning outcomes. Because SLOs are assessed using a variety of assessment instruments in different departments, the University has been unable to develop a global signature of our students’ strengths and opportunities for growth. The lack of uniformity across program assessment became the impetus for the development of a University assessment plan during the Spring 2008 semester. **(CFR 2.4, 2.6)**

The University Assessment Task Force (<http://www.csun.edu/assessment/committee.html>) is charged with developing a model of those skills, knowledge and abilities which every CSUN graduate should have. An assessment plan for Fundamental Learning Competencies would reduce program assessment redundancy and allow academic programs to focus on the distinctive knowledge and abilities which are the goals of their programs. The need for assessment of the General Education program, as indicated from WASC rubrics and CSU Executive Order 1033 is evident. Further, of the contributions to student learning made through co-curricular activities, Student Affairs has developed its own assessment plan. **(CFR 2.4)**

Fundamental Learning Competencies (FLC) from a conceptual umbrella which connects the wide range of learning opportunities provided at CSUN as well as curricular, co-curricular and GE program assessment. The FLC provide the framework for our questions: What matters about college? What will students know and be able to do upon completing their degrees? Students will find FLC goals embedded and inter-connected throughout the entire curriculum, in general education and major fields of study, and in the many co-curricular opportunities the campus affords.

- **Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World:** CSUN graduates understand the history and scope of human knowledge in the natural and social sciences and appreciate the diversity of aesthetic and cultural achievements throughout the world.

- **Intellectual and Practical Skills:** CSUN graduates can effectively engage in inquiry and problem-solving, critical analysis, and creative thinking; they have quantitative literacy, are information competent and appreciate the role of these as life-long learning skills.
- **Communication Skills:** CSUN graduates can communicate effectively through written, signed or spoken languages, through visual and audio media using text, video, graphics, and quantitative data, both individually and as a member of a team.
- **Personal and Social Responsibility:** CSUN graduates are actively engaged in diverse local and global communities, have multi-cultural knowledge, and use ethical principles in reasoning and action when solving real-world challenges.

Learning in General Education

In 2000 WASC recommended that the University replace its menu driven GE program with one that supports student learning outcomes. The Graduation Rate Task Force report considered this recommendation. While General Education Task Force (see also essay 3) carefully investigated a thematic approach to GE we found that this would not serve our student population.

The new general education (GE) package approved by the faculty Senate in April 2005 went into effect fall 2006. It identified student learning outcomes for each area of GE, and a plan to certify/recertify GE courses is in its fourth year of implementation. The number of units in GE decreased from 58 to 48 (<http://www.csun.edu/catalog/generaleducation.html>). The desired result was decreased time and units to graduation and greater flexibility to pursue additional study, such as including a minor. In the GE certification/recertification process, course portfolios are examined by committee to ensure course objectives and learning activities are aligned with the GE student learning outcomes. Plans are underway to assess GE as a program. **(CFR 2.2, 2.4)**

Written communication and information competency are two important literacy skills in GE that are implemented across the curriculum with specific student learning outcomes. Students are required to demonstrate proficiency in their writing skills, starting with the freshman writing course that features agreed upon competencies and a writing rubric, followed by embedded writing assignments (designated as writing intensive – WI) in their nine units of upper division GE courses, and passage of the Upper Division Writing Proficiency exam (UDWPE). Results of the UDWPE are compared against the writing scores on placement tests. It has been a successful practice by some programs to make passage of the UDWPE a prerequisite to upper division courses in the major.

Information competency skills have emerged as basic to all student learning as evidenced by the CSU Information Competence Initiative. The ability to identify and select appropriate research tools by which to satisfy an information need is critical to all levels of thinking, learning, and to the practical application of knowledge. To date, pre- and post-tests of students in the Freshman Seminar program have demonstrated the need for serious efforts targeted at establishing, developing, and maintaining the levels of information competence that are identified in national standards. Assessment is measured by participant statistics, pre- and post-tests and satisfaction surveys. **(CFR 1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11, 2.13)**

We are in the process of developing a plan to assess GE as a program. The Faculty Senate is discussing if a special standing committee should be formed to deal with issues surrounding GE.

Learning in the Major

Student Learning Outcomes are assessed cyclically by departments and programs and results are used to form the basis for programmatic changes where appropriate. We have re-designed the self study portion of the 5-year Program Review. Program assessment of student learning takes a central role in a department's self study and forms the basis for strategic planning and resource requests. The report is reviewed on campus, two outside reviewers are invited to spend two days on campus to assess the quality of the program, discuss findings in an exit interview with faculty and administrators, and complete a descriptive final report with commendations and recommendations. Lastly, a memorandum of understanding identifies the programs' challenges and strategies designed to address those challenges. Programs that are accredited usually substitute their accreditation for program review if the accrediting agency follows the general requirements of CSUN's program review. **(CFR 2.7)**

All programs have student learning outcomes (SLOs) and conduct ongoing program level assessments to ensure that courses are meeting those SLOs. Many of campus programs have longitudinal assessment studies within majors. Annual department assessment reports are collected at the college level for review. Colleges send summaries and analyses of their assessment reports to Office of Academic Assessment for university level review. The department feedback loop often results in curricular or pedagogical modifications, refinement of assessment tools, and/or affirmations that students are successful in achieving the assessed SLOs. Beginning last year, two colleges are identifying college level SLOs to reflect the common and unique skills and knowledge sets appropriate for and expected of their graduates. For example, the College of Health and Human Development has identified SLOs for five ethical and professional codes and is at the beginning stages of program alignment and assessment. By the time of the EER we will have made the link between FLC and learning outcomes in the major.

Graduate and undergraduate research skills and opportunities provide structured environments for the practical application of individual and team learning and accomplishment. Highly successful grant programs such as MARC (Minority Access to Research Careers), MBRS (Minority Biomedical Research Support), COR (Career Opportunities in Research), and LSAMP (Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation) have established a long tradition of opportunities in which students are matched with professionals who carefully train and guide students as they are introduced to real life work and learn to navigate complex circumstances and transfer knowledge to new situations and contexts. Internships, community engagement programs and hands-on practice in private and public institutions provide real-time experience in utilizing the kinds of problem solving and effective thinking required for success in future fields of endeavor. In-class knowledge and outside- the-classroom abilities such as the exercise of information competence and technology skills are applied to projects and research activities and evolve into sharpened and varied thinking and practical competence for lifelong learning. Graduate and undergraduate students mentored by faculty and staff apply knowledge and practical competence as they prepare and compete as individuals and in teams in such events as the Model United Nations, Nutrition Bowl, public speaking contests, solar car design, and journalism publications competitions. Both in-class and outside-the-classroom learning are merged in highly competitive settings where abilities such as effective research and thinking and values also are tested and honed. Assessment is measured by participant statistics, student learning outcomes achieved and satisfaction surveys. **(CFR 2.2, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11, 2.13)**

CSUN offers 44 master's degree programs and in fall 08 CSUN enrolled 4300 graduate students. In addition, the Tseng College of Extended Learning offers 9 master's degrees (<http://tsengcollege.csun.edu/masters.html>). In Fall 09 our second cohort of 15 students began

coursework on their Ed.D. degree (<http://library.csun.edu/mhoudyshell/EdD.html>). Plans are underway to add doctoral programs in audiology and physical therapy to meet the needs of the region. From the beginning of their careers, graduate students are made aware of the office of Graduate Studies, Research and International Programs (GRIP). New graduate students receive an orientation, which covers rules and regulations of their programs. They also receive information on all the special events and programs which can increase their learning experiences on campus. While GRIP does not have readily accessible statistics on how some of the programs have led to student success, anecdotal information from the various departments indicate that the support of scholastic activities does lead to higher retention and graduation results. Some of the programs offered by GRIP for graduate students are:

- *Graduate Equity Fellowship Program.* The annual program supports eligible graduate students, students with disabilities, and women enrolled in graduate programs where they are underrepresented. Special focus is on MA/MS students who wish to go on for a PhD. In 2007-2008 42 students were funded.
- *Thesis Support Program.* Selected students who are working on a Thesis/project or performance may apply for up to \$1,000. About \$40K are used to fund some 56 graduate students per year.
- *Graduate Student Travel Awards.* From 1998 until present \$125K have been used to fund the travel of 375 graduate students who are presenting at a peer-reviewed professional conference.
- *California Pre-Doctoral Program:* The program is designed to increase the diversity of the pool from which the California State University draws its faculty by supporting the doctoral aspirations of CSU students who have experienced economic and educational disadvantages.

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Several programs of particular importance to student learning in GE and the major are not department based and in some cases serve a special population. The effect of these programs on student learning will be investigated in time for the EER.

- *Learning Resource Center:* The Learning Resource Center (LRC) provides academic support which enables CSUN students to sharpen their critical thinking skills, strengthen their writing skills, improve their performance in subject matter classes, and develop their study strategy methods. They can achieve these goals with the help of the LRC through a variety of learning programs including workshops, one on one and group tutoring, supplemental instruction classes and interactive subject area computer programs and videos. During the academic year ending in June, 2009, over 16,000 student visits to the LRC were recorded. Additionally, during the same period, 1,349 students were enrolled in LRC Supplemental Instruction classes for Freshman Writing, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology, and Economics. **(CFR**
- *Civic Engagement and Service learning:* In 2008/09, the number of service learning courses reached 171 with 11 new courses developed during that time. Enrollment in the courses was 3850 with 77000 student hours spent in the community at some 200 community sites. The office of Community Engagement assesses the quality of all services offered to faculty, students, and community partners through the use of online surveys, pre- and post- service assessments of students' experiences and attitudes toward engagement, faculty assessment of workshops and program services, and community assessment of their relationship with CSUN and their assessment of the students' work with their agency. **(CFR**

- *National Center on Deafness (NCOD)*: Since 1973, the NCOD has offered direct communication tutoring, both individualized and group, to students who are deaf and hard of hearing. In the spring of 2008, NCOD received Petrie Grant funds to formalize and expand its tutoring program to transform its Tutoring Center into a student-centered support unit. NCOD has hired a part-time coordinator, and embarked on a training series for the staff and student tutors. The effectiveness of these efforts is being assessed using a number of measures. **(CFR 1.2, 2.a, 2.10, 2.11, 2.14)**
- *Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES)*: The Disability Resources and Educational Services department currently serves over 950 students with learning, mental health, visual mobility and communication disabilities. Services are available to all currently enrolled students with documented disabilities. Each student participates in interactive processes with department staff to establish eligibility for services, methods for accommodation, and types of support services. Support services are designed to empower students, foster independence, promote achievement of realistic career and educational goals and assist students in discovering their full potential and abilities. The department also service as a resource for faculty providing information related to best practices that support a learning centered environment for students with disabilities. **(CFR 1.5, 2.10)**
- *Oviatt Library*: To support access by students to latest research the Oviatt Library subscribes to 34,500 online journals, over 200 online databases and 154,000 ebooks. An array of electronic databases provides access to indexing and in many cases texts on a 24/7 basis from on or off campus.

As a next step in the university's decade-long commitment to the assessment of student learning, we are in the process of exploring the feasibility of creating a technological support structure to simplify and standardize assessment at the program level. Should the new system prove technically feasible, we plan to roll it out over a two-year period, with a few interested departments taking the lead in testing and refining the new system during the 2010-11 period.

Learning outside the Classroom

As a learning-centered university no longer could we say that what happens in the classroom is the only opportunity for learning as we were now looking at the students' development and success as people, not only bodies sitting in seats in classrooms. In order to accomplish all of this, there needed to be a holistic approach to our work with students. Looking at the whole person as a campus further supported the need for learning beyond the classroom.

Many of the learning outside the classroom experiences are provided by departments within the division of Student Affairs, in close collaboration with other divisions across the university. Since the last WASC review, Student Affairs has operationalized the learning centered university, publishing a number of articles (Koester, Hellenbrand, & Piper, 2005; Koester, Hellenbrand, & Piper, 2008) in *About Campus* describing how this has successfully been accomplished. The service-oriented delivery model for CSUN's Student Affairs (SA) under the leadership of Vice President Terry Piper has been replaced by one of learning centeredness with participation and support from those delivering the services. SA dedicated itself to transformation from an emphasis on individual department services to one focused on promoting learning. Through careful, deliberate discussion and development of Common Learning Themes and Outcomes, SA enacted President Koester's call for a more learning focused university. A workable and credible assessment instrument emerged through the development of rubrics for the common learning outcomes. An assessment scale that encompasses appropriate and measurable

degrees of students' development of capabilities, values and beliefs beginning with "rudimentary" to "emergent" and "maturing" and finally to "graduate capacity" was created and is being implemented. Shared and adjunct learning goals for both inside and outside the classroom outcomes were identified as some of the barriers to graduation. The assessment rubric encompasses a holistic approach to learning as reflected by measurable levels of student exposure to and participation in a range of campus student development services and programs.

Awareness that learning is not contextually bound has led to an intentional spanning of the traditional inside/outside of the classroom dichotomy. This is accomplished through the development of purposeful programs and activities that occur outside the classroom, in reinforcement and to supplement learning inside the classroom. This emphasis on learning has become ubiquitous and the learning environment has become one of collaboration and integration. The assessment of learning occurring as a result of outside the classroom efforts is an integral component of the university's assessment approach. Some of these key programs are described below. Assessment of these initiatives will be completed by the EER.

- *Living and Learning Communities (LLCs)* encompass a variety of opportunities for student development in achieving a capacity for mutually supportive relationships through participation in such programs as freshman experiences and the grouping of students in residential and non-residential environments by department or programs. LLC students work with faculty to apply classroom learning to projects and reported greater engagement with learning and both student-faculty and student-student interaction. The program support Common Learning Themes and Outcomes. Assessment uses a variety of methods including observation, self-report, skill performance measurement, and document analysis. **(CFR 2.2, 2.10 (rev.), 2.11 (rev.))**
- *Campus involvement:* Student leadership opportunities for active civic engagement abound in such activities and programs as Associated Students (student government), University Student Union Board, community service/volunteer opportunities, and through the over 240 existing student clubs and organizations, University Ambassadors, and as new student orientation leaders and advisors. As again developed from the Common Learning Outcomes, programs have been intentionally developed for students to experience, in the course of their participation, increased development and use of effective thinking and research skills to recognize the value and necessity of effective interpersonal relationships and communication, development of a sense of selflessness, and simultaneous enhancement of information competence and technology skills as they are used as tools for achieving goals. In addition, student leaders form relationships in work groups drawn from CSUN's ethnically and economically diverse student body as they both benefit themselves and others through respect for others. As officers and group members of clubs and boards, and as campus tour leaders and peer advisors, students select from various levels of participation that require them to identify and develop leadership skills appropriate to and necessary for the success of each activity which demonstrates social and civil responsibility. Assessment is measured by a variety of methods including observation, self-report, skill performance measurement, and document analysis. **(CFR 2.2, 2.9, 2.10(rev.), 2.11 (rev.))**
- *Peer Education:* Programs offered by the University Counseling Services and Student Health Center train peer educators to provide classroom presentations on a variety of topics included depression, body image, sexual assault and a variety of health-related topics. Peer educators also learn how to do outreach to the campus community and engage in conversations about

health promotion and prevention. Peer-educator learning is assessed by observation and self-report on a number of domains. The Klotz Student Health Center has also collaborated with the College of Science and Math Student Service Center and with College of Health and Human Development to provide students interested in medical or health science/administration with hands-on experiences. Changes in student capacity and behavior are measured by various assessment tools including observation, self-report, pre- and post-skill/capacity testing and satisfaction surveys. **(CFR 2.2, 2.9, 2.10 (rev.), 2.11 (rev.), 2.13)**

Dimensions of Retention

Coordinated efforts have resulted in programs that have improved the retention and persistence of our students, particularly those in their first year. These efforts engage students in the classroom and in co-curricular experiences. Some key dimensions of retention are discussed below. We are expanding our efforts and by the time of the EER will include first time transfer students in our targeted retention efforts. We identified the programs and efforts and will assess their effectiveness in time for EER.

UNIV 100 (Freshman Seminar). The CSUN Freshman Seminar was approved for general education credit in spring 2001 and UNIV 100 is similar to other freshman seminars. Each UNIV 100 classroom offers students a small academic community and requires them to research and write a "Self-Report Card," which encourages the students to take ownership of their own academic performance. A notable feature of the course is its intentional partnerships with other campus programs including the College Counseling/Student Services master's program (in the Educational Psychology and Counseling department) whose students provide one-on-one mentoring with the U-100 students; the Oviatt Library; and a variety of Student Affairs programs (including the Career Center, University Counseling Services, Financial Aid, and the Klotz Student Health Center.) Enrollment in UNIV 100 has grown from 300 students (in its first semester) to a total of 1,386 in 2008-2009. IR has collected data that suggest that students enrolling in UNIV 100 have modestly higher one-year continuation rates than students who do not enroll, while students participating in the Freshman Connection or the EOP program in addition have significantly higher short-term retention rates than everyone else. **(CFR 1.2, 2.2a, 2.10, 2.11, 2.14)**

Summer Programs for New Students: EOP Bridge Transitional Programs focus on low-income freshmen and transfer students who are the first in their families to go to college. Currently, there are two such transitional programs: Bridge Residential for "special-admit" freshmen, Bridge Commuter for "regular-admit" freshmen, Bridge Transfer for transfer students and Fresh Start for "regular admit" freshmen. In the 2008-2009 academic year, these transitional programs served 564 freshmen and transfer students. While some of the participant students could be typically regarded as "high-risk" for failure, due to entering the University with academic deficiencies, low grades in high school, and/or have poor study skills, freshmen in recent years have actually attained continuation rates of 83 to 89 percent after their first year, demonstrating that these students are actually "high potential", surpassing the 77 percent rate of regularly-admitted freshmen **(CFR 1.2, 2.2a, 2.10, 2.11, 2.14)**

The Early Warning System (TEWS): TEWS was created as a pilot program in the Fall 2005 by the Educational Opportunity Program. It is a computer-based system which facilitates the interaction of faculty, students, advisors and other student service areas. A "TEWS Alert" is typically triggered by

events such as excessive student absences, missing assignments, poor test scores and student health issues. Faculty member are trained to initiate a “TEWS Alert” to academic advisors or student service personnel as soon as aberrant student behaviors appear. The advisor or other TEWS recipient then contacts the student, provides an intervention or further referral and then reports the outcome back to the professor through the TEWS system. In Fall 2006, the TEWS system was integrated with the PeopleSoft student records system on campus. This integration allows faculty members to access the system through their online class roster. The system is currently utilized for first-year students who are enrolled in developmental writing or math classes and/or a Freshman Seminar course. Further expansion, for all students in academic jeopardy, is being explored. **(CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.13)**

Developmental Writing and Mathematics: The developmental writing program has been in existence for 20 years and is housed in four departments: Asian American Studies (AAS), Chicana/o Studies (CHS), English (ENGL), and Pan African Studies (PAS). The University Writing Council is in the process of designing a “stretch” freshman composition program. This will be a two-semester freshman composition course, in which the students will receive GE credit for one semester and elective credit for the other. Based on their EPT score, students will be placed into either the one semester freshman writing course or its two-semester version. A pilot will be in place by fall semester 2010, and the entire program should be available to all first time freshmen by spring semester 2011.

Placement into developmental mathematics courses is determined by a student’s score on the CSU system-wide Entry Level Mathematics (ELM) exam. The program produces an annual report with student survey data and pass rates. The office of Institutional Research (IR) collects data dealing with retention and graduation rate reports for students who take Developmental Mathematics. A pilot of a “stretch math” combining remedial mathematics with a college level mathematics course for non math based majors is being taught in fall 2009. **(CFR 1.2, 2.2, 2.10, 2.11, 2.14)**

Academic First Year Experiences: With the goal of creating a more seamless set of learning experiences for first-time freshmen, an Academic First Year Experiences directorship position was developed and initiated in 2007 to coordinate this process. The role includes the academic coordination and oversight of University 100 (Freshman Seminar), Early Start, Freshman Connection and the Common Reading Program and coordinates with the Freshman Faculty Series. These programs support the University’s mission to “design programs and activities to help students develop the academic competencies, professional skills, critical and creative abilities, and ethical values of learned persons who live in a democratic society, an interdependent world, and a technological age.”

Early Start Program. This program is offered the summer before the freshman year commences. Eligibility for Early Start is determined by scores on the Entry Level Math and English Placement Test and placing at the lowest level in English and/or either of two developmental levels in mathematics. Students enroll in the appropriate developmental math or English class in addition to a UNIV 100 section and participate in an academic and social immersion experience.

Freshman Connection: This one-semester program for incoming first year freshmen offers students the opportunity to register for a block of three linked classes (usually General Education classes) as part of a learning community. The learning community enables new students to take an active role in their own education. Students work with selected faculty and advisors and participate in exciting academic classes with other freshmen, giving them the opportunity to study together and help each other succeed in their first CSUN semester and beyond. Data suggest that freshman connection students do better

academically than students who don't participate in a cohort.

Learning Habits Project: The Office of Institutional Research (IR) has provided leadership and support for collecting evidence of student learning and what makes a successful CSUN learner. The Learning Habits study group, organized by IR, is an ongoing effort to understand the learning strategies employed by academically successful students on campus. In its second year, the Learning Habits study group has, through numerous student interviews, begun to uncover information that may prove useful in university-wide efforts to help students and instructors improve teaching and learning. (initial report located at: <http://www.csun.edu/~instrsch/>) **(CFR 2.8, 2.10, 4.5, 4.7)**

Conclusion

In the Institutional Proposal to WASC we proposed to study the following questions:

- A. To what extent can improved advising and support services reduce time to degree?
- B. To what extent is technology helping us in teaching, learning and advising, specifically by making online courses available and by making self-help tutorials and conferences available online?
- C. How does special programming contribute to student success?
- D. How effective are our initiatives in engaging and retaining students and what evidence do we have of that effectiveness? How can what we learn be applied to other student populations?
- E. What are the academic practices and study habits of successful learners, those who persist with at least a 2.5 GPA?

We are well positioned to answer the five research questions we have proposed to WASC.

Essay Two: Faculty and Staff Support for University Success

As CSUN has advanced as a Learning-Centered University, we have paid particular attention to the symbiosis of faculty, staff and student success. In the current environment of reduced resources coupled with increased demand for access to higher education, it is critical that we understand how we can attract, retain and provide support for faculty and staff and how this in turn serves our students and our region.

In the Institutional Proposal we asserted that “Roles played by faculty and staff are central to our commitment to student success and therefore essential to University success.” This essay will explore this theme in two ways: support **by** faculty and staff and support **for** faculty and staff. In simplest terms, we intend to aggregate data about the time, money and infrastructure invested in faculty and staff development to support student learning.

The research questions started with this overarching one: “How do we reliably and with validity measure the effect of our academic programs—the professors, curriculum and culture—on learners?” The Institutional Proposal further broke that question down into eight discrete parts:

- 1 How does CSUN use technology to support faculty, staff and student success?
- 2 How do staff contribute in traditional and non-traditional ways to University success? How do we recognize and reward staff accomplishments?
- 3 Do activities through CIELO have a sustained impact?
- 4 How does the Library facilitate faculty and student research and success?
- 5 What impact does a research experience have on a student's engagement in learning? Assuming that the experience has positive impact, is it feasible to expand opportunities to more students? How can we attract resources to sustain these efforts?
- 6 To what degree will the Faculty Research Fellows program affect faculty perceptions of the University's support for their research activities?
- 7 Has collaboration between ExL and other units produced viable distance education programs?
- 8 How will the new Ed.D. program impact other programs?

Finally, we will ask two key questions for each of these areas: What evidence do we have of support and impact? And, where applicable, how are such programs scaleable and sustainable?

Research Design and Implementation

Background

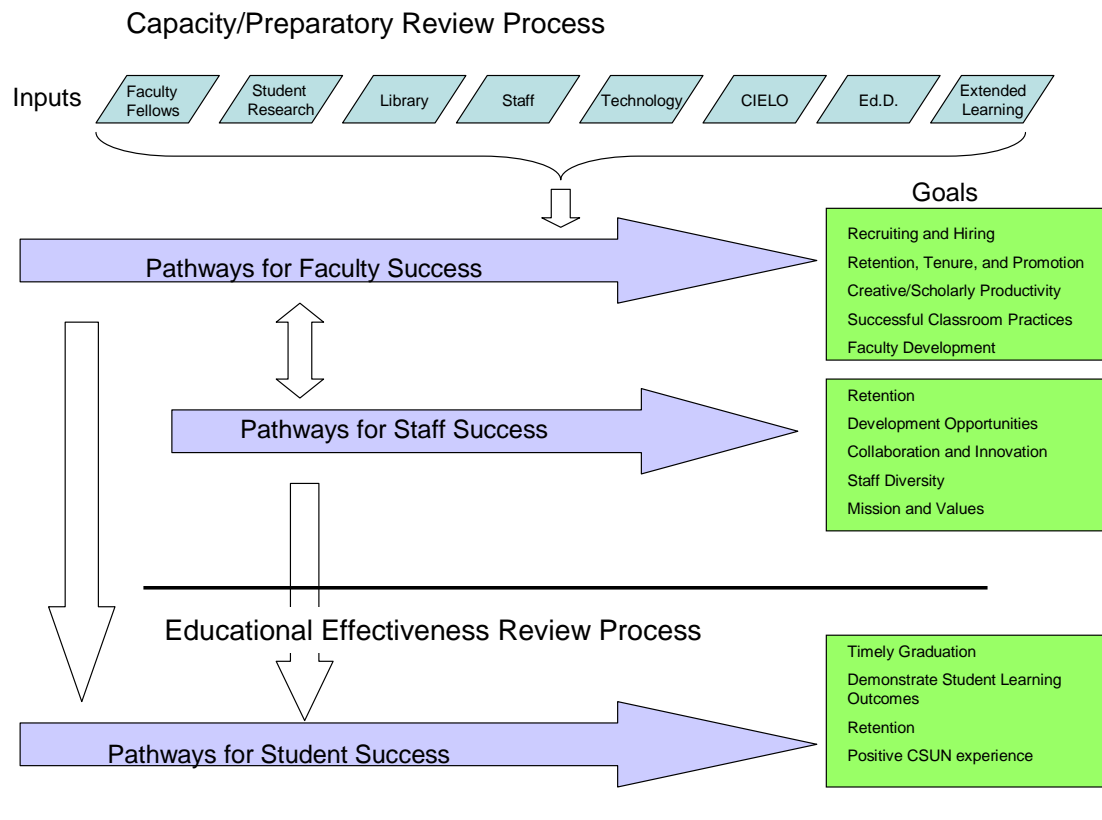
The Ford Foundation's Pathways to Higher Education project was launched in 2001 as a means of facilitating underserved students' access to, preparation for, and entrance into college (fordfound.org/pdfs/impact/pathways_to_higher_education.pdf). It has since generated tremendous interest in education-oriented pathway research (cf. pathwaystocollege.net/pubs/topic/html.) Since the inception of this major 10-year global initiative, communities of learning such as the Pathways to College Network (pathwaystocollege.net) and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE, 2003) have embraced the use of the pathway concept as an organizing idea for tracing student learning and growth over time.

The adoption of pathway research by the higher education community is not an accident. The roots of this paradigm are in applied developmental psychology which focuses on the integration of cognitive, social and perceptual skills over the life course, in sociocultural context (Greenfield 2009; Agrawal 2007.) While it is becoming the norm in student-learning research to study student growth and learning over time using pathway analyses, here we are attempting an innovative approach to pathway research by first focusing on understanding how on-campus change agents who are deeply involved in student learning traverse their own pathways through work and career at our institution. We believe that a pathway-oriented research approach complements WASC's encouragement of its universities and colleges to undertake long-term tracking of educational effectiveness.

Pathway Concept Applications in our Theme 2

We have tentatively identified a series of possible faculty and staff inputs that are presumed to impact the course of the CSUN student learning pathway; we have identified benchmarks that we think might serve as anchor points for students over the course of the pathway; and we have tapped the expertise of faculty and staff on campus to imagine what the developmental goals and outcomes of faculty, staff and student pathways look like. Our Capacity/Preparatory Review Process examines how several University resources affect faculty and staff pathways for success.

Figure 1. Research Design



The University devotes numerous resources (inputs) into faculty and staff development in order to support student learning. Examples of inputs include training, travel, sabbaticals and technology/technology services.

This research design highlights eight inputs:

- (1) Faculty Fellows: a new, university-wide program which should contribute to a more vibrant research focus and provide opportunities to mentor students.
- (2) Student Research: provides students with opportunities for faculty-directed research which should increase student engagement and success.
- (3) Library: collections and information literacy activities which support teaching, learning, and research.
- (4) Staff: direct services to students and faculty which are essential for smooth business processes.
- (5) Technology: three academic technology units facilitate instructional design, video services, and classroom technology.

(6) CIELO; Center on Innovative and Engaged Learning Opportunities: offers faculty development in pedagogical skills and techniques –in seminars, workshops and one-on-one support.

(7) Extended Learning: offers several off-site and online self-support programs which can support campus initiatives and provide faculty with opportunities to teach new and innovative courses that otherwise might not be feasible in our traditional programs.

(8) Ed.D.: the new doctoral program in education which should complement and have a positive impact on other programs at the University by bolstering the scholarly climate on campus.

Pathways: Staff

CSUN staff present a vibrant example of the tenet of synergy; the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Student outcomes and achievement are bolstered by the contributions of staff, who collaborate integrally throughout the organization in faculty-staff and inter-divisional staff partnerships that promote collegial, student and University success. This integration is an important component of staff mission, vision, and values. **(WASC standard 2.4)**

Staff contribute in traditional ways to University success through collaboration with faculty and other members of our University community. Staff often are the first point of contact for our students, parents, visitors and neighbors--their intimate knowledge of the University and its resources make our staff ideal gate-greeters and triage specialists. Additionally, our diverse and skilled staff are the foundation of the University's infrastructure and operations, facilitating almost every step of a student's transition from college applicant to graduate. Staff

- coordinate the activities of student applications and admissions;
- provide advisement and administrative support to enrolled students;
- manage educational and medical records;
- provide student services and co-curricular learning opportunities to students in areas such as leadership, student governance, athletics, health care, career selection, and disabilities services;
- oversee, maintain, and monitor the efficiency, function, safety and security of the campus facilities and grounds;
- support faculty and other staff in their achievement of the University's mission of promoting a learning-centered environment and student academic and professional success.

"Traditional" staff contributions through Student Affairs, Administration and Finance, Physical Plant Management, Police Services, Admissions and Records, Cash Services, and Academic Affairs support the

efforts of CSUN Faculty and management to provide our diverse students with an outstanding education that will facilitate their future success in California's professional workforce.

Staff have been involved in a number of special projects, several of which are discussed below, that have contributed in extraordinary ways to the University's success. **(WASC standards 2.4, 2.9, 2.11, 2.13, 3.1)**

Campus Talent Management Program

CSU Northridge recognizes the importance of developing and retaining its best and brightest employees. To groom the next generation of university leaders, the university's Office of Human Resources has instituted a comprehensive Talent Management Program. The program is designed for middle managers who have demonstrated high potential for professional growth and are selected by senior university administrators. The curriculum includes a semester of classes focused on long-range planning and a series of self-development workshops and seminars. By developing our staff into campus leaders, we help them directly contribute to our campus success.

The President and Vice Presidents are actively involved in the program, making one or more presentations at the training sessions. Response from program participants has been overwhelmingly positive. The program reinforces the University's status as an employer of choice in the region.

Retention and promotion of employees, as well as staff morale, is facilitated by campus staff development and training efforts such as the Talent Management program. Human Resource professionals provide consultation and outreach to departments for staff development and collaborate with campus departments to develop, implement, support and assess the effectiveness and outcomes of staff training. **(WASC standards 3.3, 3.4) For Appendix: List of all workshops over the past year.**

Student Affairs

Leadership in the Division of Student Affairs worked together to identify their mission, vision and beliefs, and to develop congruence and alignment with the University mission.

Dr. Terry Piper, Vice President for Student Affairs, led the division in re-imagining their professional contributions, moving from a “provision of services” perspective to a “promoting student learning” perspective. Departments in Student Affairs redefined their goals and objectives from “we will do/offer...” to learning outcomes, “as a result of our service, students will know or be able to do...”. Assessment criteria for each of the learning outcomes were developed and assessment results were entered in a feedback loop to define the learning goals, objectives and outcomes for each subsequent year. Student Affairs Strategic Priorities were developed that aligned with the President’s Priorities (**we need a link to this**) and shared language with similarly aligned Academic Affairs priorities and goals. **(WASC standards 1.8, 2.4, 2.9, 2.11, 2.13, 3.8)**

Cross-Divisional Partnerships

There are numerous partnerships between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, but one truly exemplifies the implementation of common objectives, strategies, outcomes and assessments, and the process of continuous quality improvement—the Health Administration Externship/Student Health Professional Pre-Entry Program/Klotz Student Health Center Initiative.

Funded in part by the Provost’s Learning-Centered University Mini-Grants, the Student Health Professionals Pre-Entry Program (SHP-PEP) is a first-year-to-graduation pipeline program from the EOP satellite of the College of Science and Math focused on increasing workforce diversity in the health professions. SHP-PEP was established in 2005 with 19 students and currently mentors 78 students to “foster intellectual growth, self-esteem, healthy behaviors, meaningful interpersonal relationships, independence, realistic self appraisal, clarified values, collaboration, social responsibility, spiritual awareness, and satisfying and productive lifestyles.”

The program begins with an intensive week-long summer program before the students’ first semester begins. Then, students are cohorted into a Fall Freshman Seminar Course which exposes students to experiences that help deepen their understanding of their desired fields and provides them with leadership and enrichment opportunities. Finally, students are required to complete the Health Administration Summer Rotating Externship, launched in 2005 by the College of Health and Human Development, which arranges clinic rotations for Health Administration students at the Klotz Student Health Center (KSHC) and University Counseling Services. A summary of the program and its evolution was published in the Spring 2008 issue of the Academic Exchange Quarterly. **(WASC Standards 2.3, 2.4, 2.8, 2.9, 2.11, 2.13, 3.4)**

University Innovation through Staff Initiative

Support of faculty, staff and students at CSU Northridge includes a commitment to environmental protection and sustainability. A 1 MW fuel cell plant, located on the CSUN campus, is the world's largest fuel cell plant at a university site. Phase I of the fuel cell project was completed in January 2007 following Physical Plant Management's (PPM) successful purchase and self-installed high-efficiency 1 MW Direct FuelCell® (DFC®) fuel cell plant, located south of the University Student Union complex.

Phase II of the fuel cell project, currently underway, recently installed a highly efficient 2000 ton campus satellite chiller plant (powered by the fuel cell plant) to serve the immediate and growing air conditioning and heating needs of the institution. At its core is a Student Design Project, "Uniting Technology & Nature," to maximize the sustainable aspect of an already cutting edge technological power and heating/cooling plant." An in-house Student Design Team was charged with analyzing all of the Phase I and Phase II normal waste byproducts and implementing processes that would make this the most sustainable plant possible with a minimal carbon footprint. Ultimately these waste byproducts were determined to optimally support a fast growing sub-tropical rainforest environment to which the CO2 exhaust was then delivered, enriching the surrounding plant environment, and promoting maximum CO2 sequestration. **(need link to site)**

The CSUN Greening Project was initiated in the summer of 2008, and a University-wide Institute for Sustainability was chartered in October 2008. The Institute serves as a fulcrum for the Greening Project, and has three objectives—assessing the ecological impacts of University operations, better integrating sustainability content into the University curriculum, and designing and initiating projects and programs that help to reduce the University's carbon footprint, while providing students with an interdisciplinary perspective on sustainability studies. The Institute is actively engaged in fostering interdisciplinary research and pedagogy and in providing students with novel opportunities to develop cutting edge thinking in issues of sustainability. The first of the interdisciplinary Greening Project courses was offered in Fall 2009. More information on the CSUN Greening Project can be found at the Institute's web site at: <http://www.csun.edu/sustainability>. **(WASC Standards 2.3, 2.8, 2.9, 2.11, 2.13, 3.4)**

Fostering of Successful Staff Pathways

Staff development and staff recognition are acknowledged as critical components of supporting staff and promoting professional excellence and student and University Success. The CSU Northridge Office of Human Resources has provided excellent programs for staff development and staff recognition on our

campus. Examples of staff development programs include the Talent Management Initiative (noted above) and the Employee Assistance Program (which includes a bi-weekly relaxation group and a walking program).

To recognize and promote the achievement of individual and collaborative staff contributions to the University and our students, the Presidential Award, the Award of Merit and the Team Excellence Award were created. The winners of these awards are recognized at the annual Staff Service and Excellence Recognition event. Additionally, staff years of service milestones are acknowledged at this event.

Recognition programs and focused development programs are only one part of the campus efforts to promote staff promotion and retention. Additionally, staff are provided with the opportunity to study at CSUN at minimal cost through fee-waiver programs that allow employees to complete degrees, re-train, obtain advanced degrees, and expand their knowledge and skills.

The office of Human Resources is responsible for recruiting a qualified and diverse staff to support the academic programs of the university. As noted in the Institutional Proposal, CSU reflects the rich diversity of the greater Los Angeles area as does the staff that serves the institution. Over 50 per cent of the staff are female, approximately 18% are Hispanic, 10% are Asian/Pacific Islander, and about 8% are Black/African American. We achieve this significant level of diversity through extensive recruiting in both traditional media and through organizations that support specific constituencies that have been historically underrepresented. The University is known as a good place to work, that people are treated with respect, and that success is based on competence. This reality provides fertile grounds for referral of candidates by current staff. **(WASC Standard 1.5)**

The University also has a very active professional development program to provide for the development of staff after initial hire. In 2008/09, the campus sponsored a series of nine sessions devoted to women's issues in the workplace, a program being repeated in 2009/10. In addition, sessions on topics such as work/life balance, appreciating differences, conflict resolution, personal style discovery and effective communication are offered on a recurring basis. **(WASC Standard 3.1, 3.3, 3.4)**

Faculty and staff concerns after the devastating tragedy at Virginia Tech led to the development of a Workplace Violence Prevention Education Initiative supported by a campus Behavioral Intervention Team and a Workplace Behavioral Consultation Team. Police Chief Anne Glavin and Human Resources Employee Relations Manager Jill Smith partnered with the Provost's office, Faculty Affairs, University Counseling Services, Risk Management and the Klotz Student Health Center to develop an educational

outreach to faculty and staff to provide skills and promote staff development in this arena.

Faculty Pathways

Faculty pathways to success at CSU Northridge are supported by the University mission, values, presidential priorities and institutional planning processes. These, in turn, are aligned with the WASC standards that include, “a clear sense of institutional self-understanding and direction, infrastructure to support learning, core resources and planning processes.” During the last seven years, there have been planned and strategic efforts to align our mission with presidential priorities and these with our planning and assessment. These efforts resulted in faculty having a better sense of institutional priorities (e.g., increase graduation rates and reduce time to degree, strengthen internal and external connections, create a more user-friendly campus and improve fundraising) and what they can do to support these priorities. At the same time, the campus has invested in infrastructure and core resource development (e.g., technological support, faculty development opportunities, library development, etc.) to support faculty and staff and ultimately student learning. Faculty and staff are integrated at all levels of campus planning and assessment processes and have a key role in determining how the University can support their success and how they in turn can impact student learning.

Faculty Pathway: Recruitment and Retention of Faculty

Full-time Faculty: RTP

A key aspect of building our pathways of success for faculty is our process of retention, tenure, and promotion. As described briefly herein, our RTP processes are intended to do more than simply establish the rules under which new faculty can achieve tenure and advance through the ranks to professor. Our campus’s RTP processes help the University achieve a campus culture that values and supports teaching effectiveness and learning, research and creative activities and service to the University and the community.

CSUN is especially committed to hiring faculty who will be successful in teaching and working with our diverse student population. All faculty position announcements identify this commitment as a minimum qualification and this must be accounted for in the final search report. The offices of Faculty Affairs and Equity and Diversity have worked with the Faculty Senate Educational Equity Committee to develop mandatory faculty hiring workshops. These workshops present best practices on recruitment and retention of diverse faculty as well as training for search committee members. The Director of Academic Personnel in the Office of Faculty Affairs conducts “exit interviews” with all tenured and probationary faculty who are leaving the University through resignation, retirement or termination. Included in the exit interview process are questions related to their experiences working in an ethnically and culturally diverse environment.

The written rules governing RTP are found in Section 600 (the Academic Personnel Policies and Procedures), department and college personnel policies and procedures, and the Faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement. Under this complex of policies and procedures, 261 faculty were promoted, 193 were tenured and only nine faculty were given a terminal year in the last five years, from fall 2003 through spring 2008. The high percentage of success in the RTP process reflects our campus commitment to recruiting, retaining and promoting successfully.

The mentoring of our newly hired tenure-track faculty and their introduction to the formal RTP processes begin before the first day of classes with a day-and-a-half New Faculty Orientation. New tenure-track faculty are introduced to the campus, meet the campus leadership, including the President, learn about available resources in support of faculty (e.g., library, office of research and grants, and a variety of competitive research grants) and get an overview of the RTP process. The RTP overview covers the formal process of recommendations from the department and college levels and the role of the Provost, as well as the role of student evaluations of teaching, peer classroom visits, research, creative activities and other contributions to the field of study. **(WASC Standards 1.3, 2.1)**

As new tenure-track faculty move through the normal six-year process to tenure, they are frequently reviewed in the classroom by student evaluations of teaching and peer class visits by tenured faculty in their department and the department chair. In those instances where potential problems in teaching are identified, a variety of means to improve teaching, including faculty and department chair mentoring in the department and CIELO programs to improve teaching, are employed. The emphasis on ongoing classroom review, formal and informal mentoring, development opportunities available through CIELO, and formal letters of recommendations from the various parties and the letter from the Provost all serve an environment where excellence in teaching is emphasized and valued. **(WASC Standard 2.3, 2.4, 2.8, 2.9, 2.11)**

In working to create a campus culture that supports and encourages excellence in teaching, research and service, the University provides tangible financial support and recognitions. Especially noteworthy is our newest campus award, the University Research Fellow. One faculty research fellow is selected annually in each college and receives one semester of full release to pursue a scholarly research project or creative activity. The purpose of this competitive research award is to facilitate a “network of people to catalyze initiatives; launching new collaborations; expanding and strengthening the talent base of researchers; linking researchers with other disciplines and industry; and applying knowledge to relevant area problems.” The University Research Fellow Award highlights the diversity of research activities and the excellence of many of the campus scholars and is a good example of how our campus is building pathways of success. **(link to faculty fellows list)**

Another important aspect of financial support available to many of our faculty is travel and registration funds for attending and participating in academic conferences or events. During the 2008-2009 academic year, the campus will spend approximately \$830,000 on faculty travel. The campus also offers a variety of competitive awards in teaching, research and service. **(WASC Standard 3.1, 3.2)**

Recruitment & Hiring of Part-Time Faculty

Given the increasing number of part-timers among the faculty, no university can afford not to train these valuable contributors. For the past three years, the number of part-time faculty has exceeded the number of full-time faculty and currently represents 59.7% (1315) of the total CSUN faculty (Northridge Profile, 2008). At CSUN, part-time faculty play an important role in advancing the University mission and their participation is highly valued. Many of our departments recruit part-time faculty with regional or national recognition in their field or professions, bringing real world expertise and experience to our students and programs.

CSUN engages part-time faculty in a variety of campus-sponsored programs and initiatives to help them succeed on our campus.

Once part-time faculty are hired, many of our departments develop specific methods of orienting and integrating them into the department. Some departments conduct orientation workshops, others provide packets of information and some assign senior faculty as mentors. Part-time faculty teaching is evaluated on a regular basis and part-time faculty participate in the University’s Academic Senate and the Statewide Academic Senate. Retention of part-time faculty is important and an incentive for continued teaching is the University’s provision of health benefits to part-time faculty who are teaching 6 or more units.

The University provides full access to faculty development, technology and library resources, training programs and services to all faculty, including part-time faculty. Part-time faculty participate in ongoing University faculty development programs and activities through the Center for Innovative and Engaged Learning Opportunities (CIELO), the University's primary Faculty Development Program (see below).

Part-time faculty teach in "smart" classrooms, have access to computers and participate in University- and College- based technology trainings offered throughout the year. The University's Information Technology (IT) Division offers faculty guidance and training for redesigning online and hybrid courses and developing accessible course websites. Among the applications available to faculty and supported by IT are the learning management WebCT system, web conferencing (Elluminate), video production, video streaming and smart classrooms. During 2009-10, IT will support and facilitate the campus adoption of Moodle as its campus learning management system.

Part-time faculty also have access to a wide spectrum of library services which include access to all texts, journals, databases, ebooks, CDs, DVDs, tapes, films and special collections. The University's special collections contains manuscripts, rare and unusual printed books and selected sound and video recordings.

(WASC Standards 2.3, 2.4, 2.8, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3)

Faculty Pathway: Teaching

To achieve success at a learning institution such as CSUN, it is important for faculty to excel in the classroom and, as noted above, CSUN supports a variety of programs, initiatives and training to ensure successful classroom practices and continuous faculty development. Assessment data and information about these programs are regularly obtained to provide feedback necessary to gauge the effectiveness of these programs and to assist in making plans to improve their performance.

CIELO is a unique CSUN resource with a mission focused on the development, growth and success of faculty as educators. It offers ongoing opportunities to all faculty that include participation in learning communities related to pedagogy, workshops and seminars that promote effective teaching and effective community service, grants programs that promote pedagogical and learning-based research, consultations with faculty and new faculty orientations. CIELO also coordinates internal grants supporting faculty members' pedagogical innovation to improve students' learning. The Judge Julian

Beck Learning-Centered Instructional Improvement grants and the Learning-Centered University (LCU) grants are designed to support teaching innovation and extend traditional understanding of teaching and learning. Data concerning these grants and their effectiveness will be used during educational effectiveness reviews to measure their success.

The office of Academic First Year Experiences (part of CIELO) provides year-round workshops, presentations, and brown-bag discussions on topics of particular interest to faculty teaching freshmen. Recent faculty book groups have focused on such titles as *Teaching Unprepared Students* by Kathleen Gabriel and *The Soloist* by Steve Lopez (the current year's Freshman Common Reading). Faculty workshops offered in 2008-2009 included "Teaching First Generation College Students," "Crash Course for Faculty Teaching Freshmen," and "Handling Disruption and Distress in the (Freshman) Classroom" among others. Complete event listing: <http://www.csun.edu/afye/> **(WASC Standard 2.11, 3.4)**

The Faculty Senate and the office of Faculty Affairs cooperate to sponsor the annual Faculty Retreat. This event, open to full- and part-time faculty, offers workshops designed by and for faculty covering a range of issues from developing online courses, to dealing with problem students, to balancing work and life commitments. It also provides the opportunity for faculty to meet colleagues outside of their home departments and colleges.

Technology plays an important role in providing modern pedagogical instruction. Course instruction is supported by hardware in "smart" classrooms, a campus computing and multimedia infrastructure, software applications (both desktop and centralized) and training/support programs. The central IT division is responsible for the majority of this technology. An annual IT survey is conducted with faculty, as well as staff and students, that measures what technologies are being used by faculty and where faculty obtain support and training. It provides a measure of satisfaction of the different systems that have been provided as well as the demand for these systems. IT collects attendance audits on workshops, group training and support venues such as the *Teaching & Learning Bytes* technology series or technology accessibility training programs. An emphasis has been placed on providing support and training to ensure that classroom technologies and course materials are ADA compliant. Audit information is also collected about usage and demand of centrally provided software applications such as Web services, WebCT, Illuminate, email/webmail usage and data storage. CSU Northridge's capacity for assessment includes financial accounting for these support services and for support provided to faculty for the redesign of courses for online or hybrid formats. In addition to the central IT division, classroom success is supported by dedicated Information Services (IS) groups. Each college is provided with, and maintains, an individualized IS group. These groups are trained and specialized in supporting the unique aspects presented by their colleges. **(WASC Standards 2.8, 2.13, 3.7)**

The Oviatt Library continues to play a pivotal role in the support of faculty success. The library trains, supports and educates faculty in areas of information literacy and organization of knowledge. It provides training to faculty and students in classrooms on effective use of library resources. The library regularly conducts surveys to measure satisfaction and effectiveness of services, including instructional programs. Measurement of information competence is obtained through the use of pre-test and post-test results. Other measurement data includes statistics on instructional programs and consultation with faculty. The library works in cooperation with IT division to provide assessment data on the use and satisfaction of the University Video network (UVN), a multimedia classroom broadcast service provided by the library's multimedia archive. **(WASC Standard 2.13)**

The continued development of faculty is necessary to keep pace with ever changing educational demands and audience. Faculty Affairs and the Academic Senate provide support for continuous faculty development. Attendance audits, survey results and statistics from workshops, such as the Professional Development Series and Faculty Retreat, are used to improve services for exposing faculty to new pedagogical techniques. Similar data from these offices, and the colleges, are compiled to measure the demand and effectiveness of faculty sabbaticals, University fellowships, reassigned time and University sponsored travel. **(WASC Standard 1.8)**

Faculty Pathway: Support of Creative/Scholarly Productivity

The University directly supports research and creative activity at the Department, College and University levels. To this end, the Provost has initiated and annually funds a University Fellows program that affords eight scholars a semester release in order to pursue their individual research. Additionally, the University Research & Grants Committee awards release time funded by Graduate Studies, Research & International Programs to more than 50 faculty members each year. Each college also supports research with reassigned time, as do some departments. Travel for conference attendance and presentation by faculty is supported at the department and college levels. Faculty are also receiving grants and sponsoring support for student research projects. These findings are often presented at conferences as well as being accepted in peer-reviewed publications. Faculty also may apply for financial support through the Associated Students' Instructional Related Activity Grants.

CIELO offers many workshops, seminars and symposia for faculty in learning about opportunities to promote professional development and scholarship in teaching.

The library supports faculty research activity through collections that provide the faculty informational

needs. Faculty may avail themselves to training and instruction in the use of library resources that is provided by library staff. Librarians also collaborate with faculty on collection development for research agendas.

Currently, 32 faculty from two Colleges are involved with the new Ed. D. program, just beginning its second year. They are creating research activities, providing seminars, speaker series and advising thesis projects for this program. They are involved with community relations, on-line development and web-based announcements and work with twelve affiliate faculty from outside the University.

The University was awarded one of four initial grants as part of the Carnegie Corporation of New York's Teachers for a New Era initiative. TNE allowed cross campus partnerships in research, teaching, and curriculum re-design. TNE follows three principles:

Assessing Evidence: improving preparation programs, teaching strategies, and teacher support on the basis of valid and reliable evidence mainly of pupil learning.

Creating Strong Clinical Practice and Induction: insuring that P-12 setting and the university curriculum align and indeed overlap so that theory and practice reinforce one another.

Engaging the Arts and Sciences with Education: making teacher preparation--and pupil learning--everyone's responsibility because teacher candidates must learn not just subject matter but how to make subject matter teachable. The "two cultures" must align practices and principles for candidates to experience a coherent program.

The faculty workgroups and research teams that formed as a result of TNE are ongoing efforts that allow the institution to innovate in research. Additionally, the TNE principles have become part of the CSUN culture, encouraging faculty to collaborate on research and pedagogy across college lines.

In all aspects of faculty pathways, the key is always two-fold success. That the faculty themselves are successful in their service, research and teaching, and that in turn the students achieve success through their efforts. The Provost is collecting data regarding faculty reassigned time in an effort to assess and increase support for faculty engaged in scholarly and creative pursuits. In a time of financial uncertainty it is critically important that we understand how faculty promote educational effectiveness with increasingly limited resources. **(WASC Standards 2.4, 2.8, 2.9, 2.11, 2.13, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.7)**

Conclusion

Our WASC Research Team has drawn on evidence-based research on learning “pathways” to conceptualize our work on Theme 2. Long-term tracking of educational effectiveness can result from this approach. The synergy that CSUN hopes to achieve by leveraging faculty and staff growth to serve students and help them grow is our recognized strength. It stands to reason that our *own* pathway to understanding our students’ growth can be forged through an in-depth investigation of how certain key investments that the institution makes *will act as catalysts* for faculty and staff growth—and then in turn increase students’ capacity to thrive in our learning community and beyond.

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Essay Three: Learning as an Institution

Challenges and Goals of the Learning as an Institution Research Team

The primary goal of the Learning as an Institution Research Team is to study past campus initiatives in order to find out why some of them succeeded and some of them failed. Our research addresses the following kinds of questions: Can we identify institutional factors that contributed to success or failure of past initiatives? Can we identify success factors that can be implemented in future campus initiatives? How do we learn as an institution?

Our approach uses a series of case studies of recent campus initiatives to determine the factors that contributed to their success or failure and the processes that would enhance the chance of success for future initiatives. Faculty and staff from the Learning as an Institution Research Team designed the case study process and research questions for the case studies and supervised graduate students who were tasked with gathering data from historical documents, conducting interviews and focus groups and doing a preliminary analysis of the data. Common research questions to be investigated were:

1. Which aspects of the processes used to advance an initiative contributed to its fate?
2. Did the University devote core resources to the initiative? If yes, how were they used?
3. Did the initiative feature committees or partnerships that bridge divisions and units? Were these consciously established or unplanned coincidences?
4. What evidence do we have of the relationship between selected common characteristics of initiatives and their success? How has this knowledge been used and how will it be used to increase success and efficiency in the future?
5. What roles do Program Review and accreditation play in institutional change?

Using a Case Study Approach to Examine Campus Initiatives

In 2008-2009, the Learning as an Institution Research Team began three case studies of recent campus initiatives: (1) the Graduation Rates Task Force (2001 – 2003), charged with identifying barriers to graduation; (2) the General Education Task Force (2003 – 2005), charged with reforming the campus GE Program; (3) the Campus Master Plan (2004 – 2005), charged with creating a physical Master Plan for the campus. The initiatives were chosen because they are recent (post 2001), well-defined and important. Furthermore, there is a wealth of historical data available. Most importantly, they can be compared with similar past initiatives. The case studies will be carried out over a two-year period (2008-2010). This essay includes preliminary results from the 2008-2009 time period.

The decision to use a case study approach provided the research team with an effective way to guide and organize this study of the institutional factors that contributed to the success or failure of selected campus initiatives. It also allows us to enhance the capacity of the University as a learning-centered institution because we have created capacity to reflect on and learn from ourselves. We used graduate research assistants from social science disciplines and gave them experience working with university

institutions and collaborating with faculty, staff and administrators from across the campus. Using the graduate research assistants also provided an objective view of the campus initiatives because none of the graduate assistants were involved in the original initiative processes. [WASC Standards 4.1, 4.3]

Preliminary Results from the Case Studies

Each of the case studies is briefly described below. The preliminary case study reports submitted by the graduate students have been submitted in separate documents, in Appendix XXX.

Graduation Rate Task Force Case Study

Background

At the annual Faculty Retreat in January 2001, then-Provost Louanne Kennedy presented information about CSUN's low graduation rates (i.e., the percentage of students who graduate within 4, 6 and 8 years from the date they entered as freshmen or within 2 or 4 years of the date they entered as transfer students) and announced the formation of a Graduation Rates Task Force (GRTF). Co-chaired by the Provost and then- Faculty President Diane Schwartz (later by Faculty President Michael Neubauer) and composed of 23 faculty, staff, students and administrators, the Task Force was charged with reviewing retention and graduation data, current academic policies and practices, best practices and barriers that might prevent students from graduating in a timely fashion.

During the 2001/02 academic year, three Task Force subgroups were formed to focus on University policies, advisement and pedagogy and were asked to develop and propose recommendations. A fourth group, called the research subgroup, conducted a literature review of fifty-seven articles and several books and reported on impediments to graduation.

In January 2002 the draft recommendations of the Graduation Rates Task Force were presented at a plenary session of that year's Faculty Retreat. Using input from this session, the Task Force revised its recommendations and in March 2002 the "Graduation Rates Task Force Preliminary Final Report" was distributed to the campus community for review. After receiving, reviewing and incorporating extensive feedback, a revised draft report was distributed to the University committee in September 2002. For the next five months, the Task Force continued to review data, literature and solicit comments and suggestions. In February 2003 the Task Force concluded its work and submitted the final report with recommendations to President Jolene Koester. [WASC Standards 2.10, 2.12, 2.13, 3.11, 4.6, 4.7]

The Case Study

We began our case study of the Graduation Rates Task Force (GRTF) initiative by recording four group interviews and five individual interviews and engaging in an analysis of documents related to this campus initiative. Those interviewed included members of the GRTF, faculty and staff that had experience with the GRTF process or outcomes.

Several themes emerged from our conversations. One of the overarching themes was the need for and challenges of creating change in the campus culture. The interviews revealed that at the start of the process, the campus did not have a strong culture of support for decreasing the time to graduation and the time to obtain a degree did not seem to cause a great deal of concern. As the process unfolded the work of the GRTF highlighted the need to significantly improve advisement and to increase campus awareness about poor graduation rates in order to obtain buy-in from faculty and staff to implement recommendations. Along with this, the GRTF emphasized empowering students to be responsible for their own education, through changes in policies, procedures and student advisement. In essence, those interviewed revealed that the Task Force needed to create a cultural change that encouraged all to be involved in shortening the time to degree. In the words of one interviewee, the GRTF fostered improvement of the campus programs and brought about a “culture that made changes.” It was this overall paradigm shift involving the campus as a whole that advanced the goal of improving the numbers of students graduating within six years.

Hindering these efforts were the vestiges of a culture that did not support the need for everyone to graduate in a “timely fashion” as related by some of those interviewed. There were also differences in the interpretation of the graduation rates data and an initial lack of commitment from all departments to act on some of the recommendations. In addition, as the campus began to make changes and implement the recommendations to improve graduation rates, the reasons for the implementation were sometimes forgotten.

Members of the GRTF devoted a great deal of time to this initiative, investing significant human resources. There were regularly scheduled meetings of the Task Force and the subgroups and significant time spent in gathering data. The Task Force members were asked to review literature on best practices. The preliminary recommendations of the GRTF were presented at a plenary session at a Faculty Retreat and comments were solicited. Those comments were incorporated, changes were made and the next draft of the recommendations was posted to a web site. Received feedback comments on the revision were incorporated into a final draft.

Many of the recommendations of the GRTF are still unfolding; some have been implemented. An analysis of the resources devoted to implementing the recommendations is in progress.

The GRTF “served as a model” for the “first attempt of doing things right” according to some of our case study interviewees because of its collaboration and partnering. The members of the Task Force included a wide range of campus officials and faculty who were genuinely interested in improving graduation rates. The collaboration was purposefully established to incorporate all of the different viewpoints across the breadth of the University’s faculty and staff. The members of the GRTF ensured that the student viewpoint was included and that recommendations were directed at practices and policies to help students move effectively and efficiently toward graduation. The GRTF actively sought input from the campus at large, modeling the Task Force’s collaborative effort to bring about change.

Future work for the Graduation Rates Task Force Case Study Group

An analysis of the outcomes of those GRTF recommendations that have been implemented is needed. In addition, as noted above a complete investigation of the resources devoted to the work of the Graduation Rates Task Force and to the implementation of the GRTF recommendations will need to be undertaken, including a more thorough analysis of faculty release time and staff contributions of time. Finally, the case study will be enriched by additional interviews that delve into the use of focus groups by the Graduation Rates Task Force and into the implementation of the recommendations.

General Education Reform Initiative Case Study

Background

Spurred by recommendations made in the 2000 WASC Accreditation report, in December 2003 the Faculty Senate established a General Education (GE) Reform Task Force to consider the goals and objectives of CSUN's GE program and to develop an appropriate new GE program while reducing the number of units from 58 to 48 units. This reduction in the number of units was one of the recommendations of the Graduation Rates Task Force (discussed above). The GE Reform Task Force consisted of faculty elected by the colleges and the library, three faculty from the Educational Policies Committee (EPC), a staff member appointed by the Provost and a student appointed by Associated Students. The Task Force reviewed current national theory in general education and studied the practices and models of GE found throughout California and the nation. It developed several GE models to be presented to the campus. It consulted widely within the campus community to develop the student learning goals of GE and to develop a model. In fall 2004 several proposed GE models were presented to the Faculty Senate for discussion and input. After further broad consultation and consensus building, in spring 2005 the Faculty Senate approved a new 48-unit GE program for CSUN. The new GE program was implemented in fall 2006. [WASC Standards 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.4, 3.8, 3.11, 4.1, 4.6, 4.7]

The Case Study

The new GE program was not the first attempt at GE reform at CSUN. Indeed, there had been several attempts to revise the GE package, most recently in 1997. Despite good intentions and the investment of seemingly countless hours of faculty and staff time, previous efforts failed dismally. In fact, when the recent GE reform effort was launched, it was met with much skepticism and many held little hope for its success. So, how can we account for the fact that we were able to successfully reduce the GE package by ten units and create a new GE program that facilitated student success?

The case study data that have been collected so far includes 18 recorded interviews with summary transcriptions and a collection of related historical documents. The interviewees included members of the GE Task Force, EPC and the Faculty Senate and faculty, staff or administrators who participated in some aspect of the GE initiative process. Preliminary observations based on the interview data regarding the three research questions follow.

As was the case with the GRTF, cultural change was needed. Not surprisingly, there was resistance in some quarters to any revision of the GE program. The lessons learned in the GRTF process served the campus well from the outset.

- There was broad representation and participation in the process;
- There was extensive communication and transparency;
- Strong faculty leadership was identified and clear goals established;
- There was administrative support to ameliorate any potential negative resource implications of the new GE program
- There was a perception among many that “the time was right” to move forward with a reduction in the number of units in the GE program.

The University gave some faculty reassigned time to work on the Task Force. Most of the work was done by faculty as volunteer time, as is typically the case in campus curriculum reform. There was turnover in the GE Task Force that may not have occurred if all faculty had been given reassigned time. Copying costs were born by the University or department offices. A significant amount of staff time in Admissions and Records was devoted to implementing the new GE program (computer software had to be revised and new business processes had to be established). Some respondents felt that more resources should have been devoted to the needs of advisors who had to explain the new GE program to students.

There was a consensus among the interviewees that broad representation and participation and effective communication were the primary factors contributing to the success of GE Reform. Every department and college was well represented in the discussions and ample communication was maintained throughout. The Task Force made presentations to all major stakeholder groups, had open campus meetings to discuss GE Reform and established a website where comments could be posted for public discussion. The Task Force consulted all colleges, the library, the Faculty Senate and its standing committees (EPC and Educational Resources Committee), the Council of Chairs, the Provost’s Council, the Associated Students, and Admissions and Records. Generally, consultation was within the Academic Affairs Division of the University and with the Associated Students.

Future Work for the GE Reform Case Study Group. There is a need to conduct more interviews with students, with senior administrators and with faculty who were not closely involved with the GE Reform process and who may or may not have agreed with the need to revise the GE program in the first place. We plan to survey or set up focus groups to reach a larger number of faculty and students to gauge current opinions about the success or failure of GE Reform. We also need to research the previous unsuccessful GE Reform efforts (described above) to determine what factors hindered their success. By comparing the processes of the successful and unsuccessful reform efforts we hope to be able to identify key elements that lead to success—and failure—in the conduct of initiatives on this campus. Lastly, we need to examine numerical data to determine the impact of the GE Reform efforts.

Campus Master Plan Initiative Case Study

Background

In April 2004, President Jolene Koester convened a 25-member Master Plan steering committee comprised of faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members. With assistance from a consultant planning/design team and Campus Facilities Planning and Design staff, the committee was tasked with developing a major update to the Campus Master Plan that would guide the physical development of California State University, Northridge over the next 30 years. Based on historical student enrollment trends, the Master Plan update was designed to accommodate an increase in the campus student enrollment ceiling from 25,000 to 35,000 full-time equivalent students (FTES). The Master Plan process, Envision 2035, was designed to improve upon the campus and community outreach efforts of the 1998 Campus Master Plan study that helped guide the reconstruction of the campus after the 1994 Northridge earthquake.

The Master Plan committee developed the following subcommittees to assess current conditions and future needs in key areas: Academic plan, Instructional and intercollegiate athletics, and student recreation, Community Involvement, Commercial services, Student and faculty/staff housing, Student services, and Parking and transportation.

The committee met over a 12-month period to develop the Master Plan. During this time, four sets of open forums were conducted during which stakeholders were invited to review and comment on the development of the Master Plan. Once the Master Plan draft was complete, the Envision 2035 process continued for approximately six months as the associated environmental impact study was completed. As part of the Envision 2035 process, extensive outreach was made to the campus community, local residents, the local Los Angeles City-sanctioned neighborhood council, and the local Los Angeles City Council office. The campus also maintained a website throughout the process to give stakeholders convenient access to current information and evolving documents. The resulting Master Plan was significantly influenced by the involvement and input received from stakeholders. [WASC Standards 1.1, 1.7, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3,4.8]

The Case Study

Under the guidance of faculty and staff leadership, a graduate research assistant reviewed the Envision 2035 documentation and conducted approximately 13 interviews of various committee members and other stakeholders, including faculty and staff members, students, community members, and political officials.

Again, lessons learned from the Graduation Rates Task Force process were put to good use. The University's campus and external community outreach efforts were instrumental in the development of the plan and its eventual success. Stakeholders generally indicated that the consideration of varying concerns and viewpoints by the Master Plan committee was evident in the process.

Campus faculty and staff comprised the majority of the Master Plan steering committee, and each subcommittee was chaired by a campus employee. The committee met formally on at least a monthly basis for 12 months, with subcommittee meetings occurring between meetings of the full committee.

The campus also dedicated over 2000 hours of direct staff time to the Master Plan effort. In addition, the campus initiated a major mailing campaign to over 23,000 households during the course of the initiative, in addition to a regularly updated website.

Partnerships across the campus and with the external community were a hallmark of this initiative. The success of the effort required close collaboration between faculty and staff within all five divisions of the campus (Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Information Technology, Administration and Finance and University Advancement). The Master Plan forums provided a unique opportunity for students to interact with community members, requiring both groups to consider alternative perspectives of the impacts and opportunities associated with the growth of the campus. Many of the partnerships formed as part of the Envision 2035 process have benefited the implementation of the Master Plan since 2006. The relationships established between Facilities Planning and Academic Affairs have led to greater understanding of the academic needs and usage in the planning of new or redesigned buildings. As the campus has moved forward with the implementation of the Master Plan, CSUN has been able to return to neighborhood groups to enlist input and assistance in making the campus responsive to the needs of the community. A good example of how well these community partnerships worked: When San Diego State University presented their plan at the Chancellor's office, two busloads of community people came to speak against the plan. Two months later, when the CSUN plan was presented there was no community opposition. The trust and goodwill that was established during the Master Plan process continues to serve the campus well.

Future Work for the Campus Master Plan Case Study Group.

The majority of the interview responses received to date focus specifically on the Envision 2035 process leading up to adoption of the Master Plan. The group would like to conduct additional interviews to more fully assess the University's success as a learning organization in its implementation of the plan since March 2006.

The Four WASC Standards and the Research Team Findings

This section addresses the relationship of the findings of the Learning as an Institution Research Team to the four WASC standards.

1. *Based on initial work, we would hope to find that institutional purposes and educational objectives are appropriate, clearly defined and broadly understood.*
Have we created the cultural change we sought and is the campus community broadly committed to the University mission and goals? Have we significantly reduced time to graduation? Has the new GE program contributed to student success? In what ways has the Campus Master Plan served to create and maintain new partnerships and collaborations that benefit the campus community?
[WASC Standards 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.6, 1.7]

2. *What evidence do we have that core functions are operating effectively? How can we insure that this will continue into the future?*

The GRTF and GE Reform sought to bring CSUN policies in line with national best practices in support of student learning. Have we accomplished this goal? Have we clarified and gained consensus about our mission? What have we learned in the process that will enable us to move effectively into the future? [WASC Standards 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.10, 2.12, 2.13]

3. *Do available resources, as well as effective organizational and decision-making structures, sustain the institution's operations and support achievement of its educational objectives through its investment in human, physical, fiscal and information resources?*

Have we created structures and processes that honor faculty governance while at the same time recognizing other important stakeholders such as staff, students, administration, and community members? What have we learned through the Campus Master Plan process about the integration of physical, fiscal, and information resources into the academic and administrative planning processes? [WASC Standards 3.5, 3.8, 3.11]

4. *What have we learned about understanding and transforming campus and community culture in our efforts to accomplish our purposes and educational objectives?*

The GE Reform process, the Graduation Rates Task Force and the Campus Master Plan initiatives are examples evidence of how the campus uses "systematically-gathered and broadly-based evidence to improve existing programs and practices." While there were no doubt mistakes made along the way, these three initiatives achieved unparalleled levels of success. How can we take the lessons learned and institutionalize these in future practice?[WASC Standards 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 4.8]

Transition to the WASC Educational Effectiveness Review

Our initial case study findings are based on information gathered from historical documents and interviews and focus groups with faculty, staff and students involved in the initiatives. Each show evidence that CSUN has the capacity and willingness to learn from the past to make changes in campus practices and policies that foster increased student learning and success and improve efficiency and collegiality in interactions among campus units. Furthermore, the three case studies begun as part of the Capacity and Preparatory Review form a bridge to the Education Effectiveness Report (EER) for the theme Learning as an Institution.

The case study process that we have put in place is producing data that we can use to address our major research questions in the EER phase of the WASC self study. During this next phase the three case studies will be expanded and completed. Initial information gathered in 2008-2009 from historical documents, interviews and focus groups will be augmented by additional interviews, focus groups and campus-wide surveys and by analyses of the outcomes of the initiatives, such as changes to the structure of advisement, graduation rates, and the effectiveness of outreach and collaboration efforts associated with the campus master plan implementation.

For each initiative we will look both forwards and backwards. For example, what similar initiatives preceded these and how did they fare? Did we learn from previous initiatives and use this information to structure the next initiatives to better achieve success? We hope to identify factors that contributed to the success or failure of the initiatives. We will examine on-going and current campus initiatives to determine if they are using the successful practices and avoiding the unproductive ones identified in the case studies. For example, there is a new GE Governance Task Force that is reviewing current oversight of the GE program to make recommendations concerning the governance structure and conduct of curriculum review, assessment and program review. How has what we learned during earlier GE Reform efforts (and other campus initiatives) influenced how the new GE Governance Task Force was created and is doing its work? [WASC Standards 4.1, 4.2, 4.3]

The preliminary case study reports directly addressed the research questions:

- 1 Which aspects of the processes used to advance an initiative contributed to its fate?
- 2 Did the University devote core resources to the initiative? If yes, how were they used?
- 3 Did the initiative feature committees or partnerships bridging divisions and units? Were these consciously established or unplanned coincidences?

Work will continue on these questions as we collect more data from the case study groups. The remaining research questions:

- 4 What evidence do we have of the relationship between selected common characteristics of initiatives and their success? How has this knowledge been used and how will it be used to increase success and efficiency in the future?
- 5 What roles do Program Review and accreditation play in institutional change?

will require additional research and information to provide thorough and thoughtful answers. For example, Question 4 requires that we compare and contrast several initiatives and pick out principles that defined their successes or failures. Therefore, we will address this Question after the initial case studies and their related expanded studies are completed as part of the EER phase of the WASC self-study.

Question 5 expands the work of the Learning as an Institution Research Team beyond the initial three case studies. In an effort to understand the role of Program Review and accreditation in institutional transformation, we plan to do an in-depth analysis of selected campus programs reviews, such as

academic department program reviews and accreditation, the assessment of the Academic First Year Experience and possibly the accreditation of the Student Health Center. As we have done with our three case studies, we hope to understand how we can create and sustain a campus culture that is responsive to the communities we serve and open to change. What aspects of program review and accreditation contribute to institutional transformation? While many program reviews and accreditation final reports contain recommendations for change, what factors lead to the recommendations being implemented or rejected? Do program reviews and accreditation self-studies themselves contribute to institutional transformation? Can we these processes be integrated into the established campus-wide planning processes. [WASC Standards 2.3, 2.7]

A Learning Experience at a Learning –Centered University

Let us conclude this essay by quoting our graduate research assistants' summary of their learning experience as members of the Learning as an Institution Research Team:

“Serving as members of a research team, consisting primarily of administrators and faculty members, that was working towards an important institutional goal was a unique and, ultimately, rewarding learning experience. Our research gave of us a view of the University that students seldom get to see, and we interacted with administrators and faculty members in ways that students seldom do. Besides the direct learning we received, such as in interview techniques and document analysis, which will be extremely useful to our careers as graduate students, we also came to understand more clearly how the University operates as an institution, how departments and colleges relate to each other, and became much more comfortable working with and approaching individuals who traditionally seem unapproachable to the student.”

When the University selected “Learning as an Institution” as the third theme in our WASC re-accreditation process we did so because we hoped that a self-reflective process would allow us to focus not only on what we learn but how we learn and how we put this learning into practice. Having completed our Capacity and Preparatory Review, we can summarize the main points as follows:

- Culture shift is important and difficult to accomplish
- It is important to provide constant reminders of why change is necessary
- For change to occur, the University must support it with time and resources
- Collaboration and partnering is critical
- Change is on-going

At this point in our endeavor, we are confident that we will emerge with a report for the Educational Effectiveness Review that can provide a template for future endeavors.

CSUN's 2009 Response to Recommendations

from the WASC Visiting Team of May 2000

The final recommendation of the 2000 Reaccreditation Visiting Team was, “. . . [I]t is time to look forward to what the CSUN of the 21st Century will be (p. 58).” As the visitors wisely noted, “The institution is now at a crossroads, with new strategic plans, new resources, new energy and new campus leadership (p. 57).” The accuracy of this assessment can be seen in our positive response and forward movement on virtually all of the recommendations made in that 2000 report.

While the visiting team made specific recommendations for each of the three themes, this response focuses on the eight overall recommendations found at the end of the reaccreditation visit report on pages 55-58. Where appropriate, responses to specific theme-based recommendations are included.

Identify criteria by which to determine progress toward University goals: A reorganized Office of Institutional Research with an expanded staff of data analysts under the leadership of a new director means that CSUN can and does track students' progress toward degree in a variety of ways and for a variety of populations across their academic careers. Particular attention and analysis are paid to those special programs developed to support retention at the freshman level—e.g. developmental writing and mathematics, Freshman Orientation, the Freshman Seminar, Freshman Common Reading and Freshman Convocation as well as the impact of Supplemental Instruction and subject area tutoring on courses with traditionally high rates of D's, F's and U's. Decisions about “where to make interventions and financial investments to increase progress to degree (p. 56)” now are based on evidence.

Coordination of academic advisement across colleges and between faculty and professional staff advisors has been a focus of activity for the last three years in order to eliminate the dissemination of conflicting information and misinformation to students. This coordination is spearheaded by a joint committee of Academic and Student Affairs personnel and includes consultation on policy and procedural changes, on-going and special meetings with advisors, increased involvement of associate deans in the process and vastly improved communications.

Institute a Moratorium on New Initiatives: While we can't say that we have stopped developing and funding new initiatives, we can say that new programs are developed and implemented based on their centrality to identified University priorities. We believe the proliferation of discrete initiatives that the visiting team found a decade ago no longer is an issue for Cal State Northridge. Presidential priorities, intra- and interdivisional planning and budgeting are closely connected with each other in a transparent process that involves consultation among administration, staff and faculty. Just one example of such an initiative is Freshman Convocation, now in its third year. Representatives from across the University, including students, are involved in the planning and execution under the aegis of Student Affairs. For two of the three years, the keynote speaker has been the author of the book selected for the Freshman Common Reading Program, used in numerous 100-level courses. Faculty who wish to use the book in their courses have access to a website with numerous ideas of how to do so; faculty come to Convocation and are invited to bring their students. Any staffer or administrator can get a free copy of the book provided they promise to engage one freshman in conversation about it.

Create a More Coherent General Education Program: Cal State Northridge has a new General Education program, developed between 2004 and 2005 and in effect since Fall 2006. Not only did the reform reduce GE requirements from 58 to 48 units, but in the redesign the GE Task Force created new and focused learning objectives for each GE section. Recertification of GE courses began in 2007, in a process that requires departments to describe how the course meets the learning objectives of the GE section. The next step, currently under consideration by a new GE Task Force, is to create a GE Council as a standing committee of the Faculty Senate. This Council would design and implement GE program review, move toward assessment of GE as part of the recertification process, oversee the recertification of all GE courses and approve new GE curriculum. We believe that while we continue to offer students a “menu-driven” GE package, we also employ “gradual, firm and focused efforts (p. 56)” to address how courses and sections relate to each other, to a bachelor’s degree and to the major. These efforts make the value of General Education more evident to both students and faculty.

Develop an Institutional Technology Plan: In the nine years since the 2000 recommendations were made in the reviewers’ report, CSUN has made enormous changes and improvements in Institutional Technology in all areas of stated concern. At the end of this summary of responses, you will find details relevant to the bulleted technology points made on pages 41-44 of the 2000 report. Those details will show how change was made to:

- stabilize leadership;
- redesign administrative and governance structures, including processes for establishing strategic and budgetary goals and planning priorities linked to the presidential priorities;
- develop new systems for student access including a new (2003) and enhanced (2007) student portal with many web-based support services, academic and business-oriented;
- open dozens of new smart classrooms; enhance wireless connectivity throughout the campus by replacing existing older equipment and expanding coverage with additional access points to increase wireless access both indoors and outside;
- support and expand faculty use of technology to enhance their courses, in their teaching, in interacting with students and in doing effective research;
- evaluate and adopt user-friendly and consistent technology practices that integrate with each other and avoid duplication of effort in supporting multiple platforms;
- ensure greater alignment among faculty, student and staff computing resources, including a new Faculty Technology Center in addition to the IT Help Center.

Technology Staffing Requirements: Since the WASC recommendation that CSUN assess University staffing requirements and their need for development in the area of technology, the University has increased technology support and training in a number of ways that include:

- establishing an Information Technology Help Center--serving faculty, staff and students--that can be contacted via phone, in person, via email and online;

- hiring a Senior Director of Academic Technology to develop the services and technology framework necessary to support faculty as they incorporate technology into their teaching and develop online/hybrid courses;
- developing an integrated training calendar and offer hands-on training courses that cover topics such as using administrative applications, the learning management system, basic office productivity applications and accessibility;
- developing online training guides and tutorials available to users via the web.

Develop Plans and Mechanisms for Coordinating Assessment, including Roles and Responsibilities: We are so much better, more coordinated and more coherent in our assessment activities than we were a decade ago that to look back at what we used to do is to smile at our first steps. The 2000 accreditation visitors rightly noted that they saw—and the campus community felt—a need for more coordination and coherence among assessment efforts. Department/program-based assessment is truly on-going now, led by the director of Academic Assessment, a faculty member on full reassigned time. She meets regularly with department-based assessment liaisons, working with them to develop and disseminate a toolbox of appropriate methods for assessment. For the past five years, each department has assessed one Student Learning Outcome in their program(s) and has made change where the need for change is uncovered. This on-going assessment is an integral and critical part of Program Review, which occurs every five years and which was revised two years ago to become increasingly assessment-based. (Program Review also part of the Office of Academic Assessment.)

In addition to the value for Program Review and curricular change, results of the annual SLO assessment are compiled at both the college and University levels. Two years ago, several of the eight academic colleges began to look at college-based assessment as well. Additionally, in the last two years, the need to develop a program to assess our overarching University Learning Themes has become a campus focus.

As was noted in the 2000 report, there was little linkage/connection between assessment of activities in and outside of the classroom (curricular and co-curricular). The connection between the two areas is evident in how they relate to the overarching themes and to each other, since both contribute to the success of our students. Recently, the vice president of Student Affairs and the Director of Academic Assessment presented together at an assessment conference, just one example of the links being created and the work honored.

Several other 2000 recommendations about assessment have been addressed:

- The Director of Institutional Research and the Director of Academic Assessment have clearly defined and often discrete roles and responsibilities. More importantly, they work together in a number of arenas in support of assessment. They meet together regularly.
- Alumni surveys no longer are used as a data collection tool for Program Review.

Develop a Comprehensive Communications Plan: We have been most successful in this arena in our communication with students, from the time they apply to attend Cal State Northridge until they

graduate. Communications rest primarily in the Office of Student Marketing & Communications, a function of Student Affairs. Regular meetings involve staff and administrators from SMC, Admissions and Records and Undergraduate Studies. Problems are identified and addressed rapidly. Communication is variously through snailmail, email and the student portal. It is organized, chronologic and population-targeted.

As to communications with the other two important parts of the CSUN community (faculty and staff), we believe most would say that they are made aware of activities, policy changes and the like in a timely manner. Even more importantly, many would indicate they are routinely consulted on these changes in advance of their implementation.

Communications with the University community were ramped up immeasurably beginning in July 2009 as the state and CSU budget crises demanded the rapid dissemination of information and forums for discussion. In effect, Cal State Northridge has been in crisis communications mode and is handling it well.

Look Forward: Which brings us to the final recommendation, the one with which we started this update, “The team recommends that the University begin to look forward to the future (p. 57).” As you have seen in the three essays that constitute the essence of this CPR, we continue to invest maximum time and effort into ensuring the education of our students—currently and into the future. The 1994 Northridge earthquake was so long ago that more than ___ percent of our current faculty and staff—and 100% (or nearly so) of our students—were not here then. It’s ancient history. However, the current financial disaster is teaching us new lessons about designing for the future.