

WASC Visiting Team Report
California State University—Dominguez Hills
Site Visit October 8-10, 2006

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I Introduction

Description of Institution and Visit

California State University – Dominguez Hills is a public higher education institution, one of twenty-three universities in the CSU system. It is located in Carson, California, and serves the population of the greater Los Angeles basin. CSU – Dominguez Hills was founded by a legislative act in the early 1960s as South Bay State College. The first classes began in 1965. The name was changed in 1966 to California State University – Dominguez Hills and the first class graduated in June of 1967.

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges first accredited CSU – Dominguez Hills in 1964 when the school opened. The campus accreditation was renewed routinely until 1998 when there were concerns raised about its distance education programs. In 1999, the institution was placed on “warning”. In a subsequent site visit during 2002, the warning was removed and accreditation was reaffirmed. The current visit is the first since the reaffirmation of accreditation in 2002. During the four years since the last visit, there have been significant changes at the campus which will be chronicled in this report.

A team of six members conducted the Capacity and Preparatory Review site visit from October 8-10, 2006. This report represents the consolidated findings of that team. The report is divided into three sections—an introduction, a review of the standards, and a recommendations section.

Quality of the Capacity and Preparatory Report and Alignment with the Institutional Proposal

California State University – Dominguez Hills presented a proposal for the Capacity and Preparatory Review in July 2006 that focused on four general themes:

- Academic Quality
- Campus Change
- Diversity
- Civic Engagement

The proposal documents institutional reflection and planning processes that have involved all of the major groups on campus. (CFR 4.1) The proposal indicated that CSU – Dominguez Hills would use the re-accreditation process to move toward the goal of becoming a learning-centered institution.

In the capacity review and during the visit, members of the team heard a great deal about academic quality, campus change, and diversity. The civic engagement focus was not nearly as well developed. This focus was derived from the President's notion of communiversity; however, the impression was that the development of this initiative is lagging far behind the others.

The self-study includes a section responding to previous WASC recommendations. In 2002, the WASC team commented favorably on the culture of evidence being developed and urged the campus to sustain and further develop those efforts. The clear indication from our recent visit is that the campus has continued in this favorable direction. As urged in 2002, the campus has focused substantial attention on student learning and we look forward to data examining the effect of Gateways, SPARK!, University 101, and other initiatives and programs.

II Evaluation of Institutional Capacity Under the WASC Standards

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives. Institutional Purposes

California State University - Dominguez Hills has a stated institutional mission and espouses values and educational objectives that reflect the institution's unique place in the Cal State system and in the region. These were evidenced in all of the documentation and were affirmed during the site visit. (CFR 1.1 & 1.2)

As a public institution, and a member of the CSU system, California State University - Dominguez Hills adheres to national standards of academic freedom. The CSU system has an independent governing board that oversees policies and operations. (CFR 3.9) While the system deals with overall resource issues and policies, each campus operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy (CFR 1.6) In addition, in the meeting with the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate, we learned that the relationship between the faculty and the administration has developed into a collaborative one, built on a mutual understanding of goals. The openness and transparency of the administration and the commitment and involvement of the faculty in building the architecture to achieve the campus's stated goals have facilitated this collaborative spirit. (CFR 1.3, 1.4, 3.11)

The campus was born amidst the Watts riots and its current location was selected with an eye to serving local, underrepresented students who wanted to attend college. In 2000, Dominguez Hills celebrated its 40th anniversary and in those 40 years, the commitment to serve a regional and underrepresented population has remained strong. This is reflected in the campus' mission statement, in the six goals that comprise the strategic plan, and in their statement of core values.

“California State University, Dominguez Hills is a comprehensive urban university, located in the city of Carson and primarily serving the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area. The University is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic teaching and learning community dedicated to excellence and committed to educating a student population of unprecedented diversity for leadership roles in the global community of the 21st Century.” *Mission Statement*

“Goal 3. Build upon and take full advantage of our unique cultural and demographic diversity.” *Strategic Plan*

“We value diversity because it enriches learning and deepens understanding of others and ourselves.” *Core Values*

These documents, excerpted briefly here to showcase the history of commitment to urban Los Angeles students, are among many documents that serve to frame the activities of the campus. The strategic plan, for example, completed in 2003, has been reviewed annually, and continuously reflects the direction of the university. The four goals listed in 2003 have been expanded for 2006-2007 to highlight the increasing importance of research, scholarly and creative activity on the campus. (CFR 2.8, 2.9) The strategic plan, then, is not a document gathering dust on a shelf, with its contents generally unknown, but is a current and widely shared statement of the campus' plans for the future.

CSU - Dominguez Hills prepared for the recent accreditation review diligently and presented a thorough and informative self-study with extensive supportive documents. During the visit, the administration, faculty, and various groups were candid and reflective about the challenges they face. A brief listing of some of those challenges and the actions that have been taken to address them will convey the passion and commitment that is characteristic of the campus and will attest to the institution's engagement with its students, faculty, and community. (CFR 1.9)

The campus enrolls approximately 12,500 students who represent nearly 9,000 FTE. As such, CSU Dominguez Hills is one of the smaller CSU campuses, and is one of six state universities that serve the Los Angeles basin. Within 50 miles, eligible students may attend Cal State Fullerton, Cal State Long Beach, Cal State Los Angeles, Cal State Northridge, Cal State Pomona or Cal State Dominguez Hills. This places significant competitive pressure upon CSU Dominguez Hills;

hence it is not surprising that the campus's history is one of serving commuter students and students transferring from local community colleges.

In the last three years, the administration and staff have launched multiple new recruiting efforts and have engaged the community in many arenas. One result of these efforts is that Dominguez Hills is now attracting more first time freshmen. During the team visit, the campus announced that the freshman class for fall 2006 was the largest in the school's history.

Integrity

CSU Dominguez Hills in its written materials, on its website, and in presentations represents itself honestly to the public. It markets itself as being an institution that focuses upon student success and the Team found consistent evidence that the institution is dedicated to recruiting and retaining students and helping them achieve their academic goals. (CFR 1.7)

One aspect of that commitment is the established policies and procedures that are available to address student and faculty grievances. A faculty handbook that is available on-line points faculty toward a discussion of the following:

- University Structure and Governance
- The General Faculty and the Academic Senate
- Professional Standards, Responsibilities, and Obligations
- Personnel Policies: Appointment, Reappointment, Tenure, and Promotion
- Student Related Policies
- General Administrative Policies & Procedures

The handbook also lists avenues for grievances. A section on student policies in the faculty handbook and an accompanying *Students' Rights and Responsibilities Handbook* help students understand their rights and responsibilities and how to pursue a grievance. (CFR 1.8)

Dominguez Hills is one of the most diverse higher education institutions in the country. As such it is setting a path that many other institutions will follow in its student life programs, its curriculum, and its understanding of the many faces of diversity. One of the first realizations is that the recruitment of a diverse faculty and staff to serve students is only the first step. That step must be accompanied by changes to existing pedagogical practices if a campus is to provide a healthy learning environment for students. There is a growing concern nationally that existing teaching practices within the traditional academic culture may not serve today's diverse student populations. The belief that "one size fits all" in approaches to pedagogy and learning styles used in traditional academic cultures may be culturally insensitive and doing a disservice, and at times harming, the very students they set out to serve.

In discussing their approach to diversity, the leadership at Dominguez Hills made the important point that many of the underrepresented students who come to Dominguez Hills have come from high schools that are not diverse—they are 90% Hispanic or 85% African American. In student life programs, and increasingly within the curriculum, the institution focuses on presenting many perspectives and touting the value to be gained from attending a campus in which many groups are represented. Student life programs are designed to reduce prejudice and refocus students' attitudes on working together in a multicultural society. Within the academic curriculum, there are particular courses and areas where the multicultural, global society is highlighted.

- Cultural competence in nursing is embedded in the curriculum
- The Division of World Cultural Studies
- Specific political science courses (CFR 1.5)

In recent years, the Dominguez Hills campus has broadened its view of diversity to include gender, sexual orientation, spiritual or religious orientation or affiliation, social class, age, and a variety of disabilities. As the enrollment has shifted to include more 18 year-olds as freshmen, the campus has seen a divide between older and younger students, and full-time and part time students. The programs to identify and incorporate all of these differences are still being formed.

The documents provided to the team focused on racial and ethnic diversity among the students and the faculty. While it is evident that the staff in Student Affairs represents many facets of the student population, the data documenting that diversity was not available. In upcoming visits, we would hope to see the data examining the ethnic and racial diversity among administrators and staff.

CSU-Dominguez Hills serves a unique demographic population of students and is only now beginning to fully appreciate all of the dimensions of diversity among its students and perhaps has focused too narrowly on just racial, ethnic and gender differences. (CFR 1.5)

To assist in the expansion of the diversity efforts, the Team would like to see a variety of assessments for educational effectiveness that will capture the richness of the CSU Dominguez Hills experience. One example would be to gather data on entering students who are the first in their families to attend college.

Similarly it has been observed and recommended that the faculty, via the Senate Executive Committee, begin to consistently assess the scope and nature of diversity and determine how diversity is impacting the faculty in personal and professional growth (e. g. pedagogy, teaching styles and innovations). There are some initial innovations along this line but little systematic assessment or evidence gathering exist.

In conclusion, since the arrival of President Lyons and the more recent hiring of Provost Mori, the campus has built an impressive academic architecture that guides planning, reviews quality, and allocates resources. The mission statement, the academic plan, and resource allocation are knitted together and are built on a broadly based consensus. (CFR 3.10)

Standard 2: Achieving Education Objectives Through Core Functions

Teaching and Learning

CSU – Dominguez Hills offers 43 distinct majors in undergraduate education and 21 graduate degrees. They also offer a robust number of programs through a distance-learning modality. The University is structured into six distinct colleges, each with the appropriate systems of leadership to support and direct teaching, learning, service and research. Enrollments have fluctuated in recent years with steady gains in first-time freshmen and upper division transfer students. However, enrollment by headcount has diminished in the past four years impacting institutional budgets. There are currently (2005 data) 256 full-time faculty and 424 part-time faculty. (CFR 2.1, 2.2)

With the launching of the Academic Master Plan and the approval of several new academic programs, an upsurge in faculty hiring has occurred. In the last three to four years, approximately 100 faculty have been hired and, in a serendipitous turn of events, all of the deans have been replaced. (CFR 3.10) The new hires are well-qualified in terms of scholarly credentials and bring with them a commitment to teaching. The new recruits have added to the ethnic, gender, and racial diversity of the faculty. The institution has responded to this new influx of scholarly talent by examining how it fosters the career development of young faculty. (CFR 3.4)

A faculty seminar is held monthly in the fall to orient the new cohort of faculty. The seminar includes a module on diversity. Mentors for each new faculty member help guide these new colleagues through the review process. A faculty handbook that is available on-line points faculty toward a discussion of the following:

- University Structure and Governance
- The General Faculty and the Academic Senate
- Professional Standards, Responsibilities, and Obligations
- Personnel Policies: Appointment, Reappointment, Tenure, and Promotion
- Student-Related Policies
- General Administrative Policies & Procedures

The faculty and deans hired during the last three years have prompted a reexamination of the standards for promotion and tenure. Although these standards vary from discipline to discipline, the clear sense of the deans is that research and scholarly activity have become more prominent in tenure and promotion reviews.

In many cases, the research and scholarly activity undertaken by faculty involve students and provide a research base for graduate study. During the Team visit, the campus hosted the 3rd Annual Poster Session that focused on studies of the campus community. Some of these presentations involved students. (CFR 2.8, 2.9)

Distance Education is an integral and important aspect of programming at CSU, Dominguez Hills. Developed as a response to student needs and opportunities for expanding high-quality programming to students, the campus has developed various modalities to meet student demand. The library has supported these efforts through a dedicated staff position, and through considerable sustained effort, appears to be meeting the challenge of supporting distance students. Currently there are seven Masters Degree Programs, three Bachelor's degree programs, seven certificate programs as well as upper division courses, certificate programs and self-paced and instructor led professional programs. Programs are offered using a student cohort model for Educational Leadership Master's Students, fully on-line undergraduate and graduate Nursing programs, Business and Humanities programs, cable television programming, and hybrids involving different modalities in combination within a single program or course.

Students are positive about these different experiences. A member of the Team met with students from an off-site Educational Leadership Program for aspiring principals. The program focus is to meet the educational needs of an urban and diverse population working in underperforming schools. The class was unanimous in their praise for the curriculum, the convenience, the support by the library and technology units as well as the advantage of having fellow classmates all of whom had just completed a day of teaching. Many of these classroom teachers had grown up in the community, attended CSU Dominguez Hills or other nearby universities and were delighted at the opportunity to study near their homes and workplaces. The quality of the curriculum is highly rated by these students. College of Education faculty evaluate courses regularly and the cohort program students complete a survey at the end of each semester. Faculty meet and review this material and make changes where evidence indicates the need. Evaluation includes measures of how well the curriculum is preparing students to meet the state requirements for principals. (CFR 3.6)

Although the team did not meet with students from other programs, students were encouraged to use email to contact the WASC team. Of the 143 e-mail responses to the WASC Team, including responses from Cambodia and Malta, over 100 praised the distance education program for its effectiveness, quality and

flexibility. Many graduates noted the care and concern of the faculty to assist them in the learning process. Several have gone on to positions of responsibility in their community and directly identify the Dominguez Hills programs as leading to their success.

The campus has dramatically increased their data collection capability to assure student success. For example, from a relatively recent time where syllabi were optional, the campus now has all course syllabi identifying course learning goals. There is an on-line roadmap outlining how to complete majors and programs efficiently, program review and assessment exist in most programs to evaluate student learning and make evidence-based changes. Co-curricular programs in the Student Affairs area utilize evidence in support of student learning (e. g. health and counseling surveys). (CFR 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.7)

Baccalaureate programs have been revamped to better serve the needs of the student population and to address some of the remedial education needs of the students. (CFR 2.3-2.7)

- For example, an intensive writing program has been undertaken that will require freshmen entering in 2007 and transfers entering in 2009 to take two courses that are labeled writing intensive. This curriculum modification was passed based on data collected from students in the past three years. To prepare for this change, over 100 faculty members have gone through the writing intensive course workshop and have agreed to develop two courses. These classes have a lower student cap and are in alignment with the goals of general education. The introduction of this curriculum change has been supported by a Department of Education grant titled “Enhancing Critical Literacy Project.”

Two required undergraduate English courses are directed toward those whose skills need to be brought to the college level--one in writing and one in reading (ENG 088 and ENG 099).

- The campus is examining the students’ competencies in information technology, obtaining information on current competency and asking whether this should be part of general education requirements. In a recent survey, Dominguez Hills students showed an interesting dichotomy in their understanding of technology and their critical thinking. The younger students were less adept at critical thinking but did have technical literacy – older students were just the opposite.

The campus is beginning to link diversity into its curriculum. Anthropology and Sociology are two examples of departments that have actively and creatively investigated how instructors can most effectively imbed diversity into their courses. The universal writing prompt in the University 101 course is on diversity, providing an opportunity to hear from 330 students providing important feedback to the campus. The Division of World Cultural Studies allows explicitly

for integration of subject matter across disciplinary boundaries, hence showing students how multiple cultures function, but still allowing students within a particular ethnic group to build their identity. Another new program “negotiation, conflict resolution and peace building” also incorporates disciplinary and cultural diversity resulting in the production of graduates who have brought distinction to the University.

Enrollment and Retention

Four years ago, 40% of the FTEs at Dominguez Hills were generated by students in undergraduate preparation for teaching credential or in teaching credential programs.. The campus had not hired new faculty in some departments for many years because the academic programs were so heavily tilted toward education. As a consequence of the state budgetary crisis of 2002-2003 and the resulting reductions in funding for education, the need for teachers declined and enrollments in education followed suit. In addition, during the last two years, the local community colleges that had provided a steady stream of transfer students to Dominguez Hills began to experience enrollment decreases. In short order, two of the three streams of students to Dominguez Hills were disrupted. Despite the reductions in enrollment from these two streams, the flow of new freshmen attending Dominguez Hills has continued to increase.

To deal with enrollment issues, the Academic Master Plan outlines new programming and links that programming to the needs of the local population. As more freshmen have matriculated, programs highlighting the first year experience have emerged. All of these speak to the campus’s support for student learning. (CFR 2.10-2.14)

As a team, we were walked through myriad activities undertaken to enhance enrollment and to retain students once they arrive—University 101, BEAMS, the first year experience, the early warning system, Gateways, SPARK!, etc. These activities respond to the needs of first generation students, underrepresented students, and students whose academic preparation is lacking. In addition, in launching these co-curricular programs, the campus has demonstrated that they understand the students they serve—the students’ financial backgrounds, their family circumstances, their academic histories, their motivations, and their career horizons. The net result is a series of programs and activities that seem to be exquisitely meshed with students’ needs.

Retention of underrepresented students has been highlighted nationally as a growing concern. CSU Dominguez Hills has recognized that retaining students who have already matriculated helps enrollment figures. Hence, they have separated enrollment and retention activities, put together a Student Retention Policy Council and are pursuing a number of activities designed to retain their

current students. At the time of the team visit this council had met only twice, but their agenda shows clear goals, thought and creativity.

- Math and English are working with the advising center to contact students who are struggling. Students may be contacted as early as three weeks into their first semester. The hope is that this early warning system will help students succeed and reduce the need to repeat developmental courses.
- Evening child care is recommended as nearly 70% of the students are women and half attend after 5:30 PM
- A mandatory summer bridge program is required for incoming freshmen needing remedial courses
- University 101 should be required of all incoming freshmen.
- University 301, an analog of University 101 for transfer students, should be developed
- An evening administrator to coordinate evening services should be provided at the information center
- Information sent to students should include a clear contact person
- Realization that parents and family circumstances play an important role in retention, especially among first generation students. Parents should be cultivated as part of the student's support system.

In the next 18 months, these programs and recommendations should, from our vantage point, promote enrollment increases, increases in retention rates of freshmen, increases in graduation rates, increases in graduate school applications and acceptances, and so on. As many of these programs have been instituted quite recently, the data indicating whether they are having the desired impact is not yet available. We can expect much more information on telling indices by the 2008 Educational Effectiveness visit. (CFR 2.10-2.14)

In sum, the campus puts enormous effort into achieving its educational objectives. It has begun to develop programs to integrate diversity into the curriculum. It has thought carefully about enrollment and retention issues that impinge on current and prospective students. It has been creative and resourceful in obtaining extramural funding and developing programs to meet the needs of the student population, and through collaboration with student government has managed to address important curricular and co-curricular issues despite serious financial constraints.

Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Sustainability

Faculty and Staff

California State University – Dominguez Hills employs human, physical, fiscal and informational resources consistent with its educational mission (CFR 3.1, 3.5). There is a palpable vitality among the faculty, staff and administration, noting deep commitments to institutional mission, vision and established structures and processes. This vitality appears to flourish from the strong and excellent leadership team that leads by examples, including personal sacrifice for the good of the educational community (CFR 3.2).

Faculty recruitment and workloads appear to be adequate, although some concern exists as to the pressures placed upon new, diverse faculty who may be participating in multiple service activities. (CFR 3.3) With the recent pressures of declining student enrollments, many faculty are actively participating in recruitment activities, campus-wide education days, while also carrying heavy teaching loads and research projects. New faculty are given sufficient assistance in becoming acclimated to the environment, especially through workshops and mentorships. Printed information is also available to assist them in learning the university system.

CSU Dominguez Hills has a clear understanding of the student population they serve. Significant numbers of their students are not academically prepared for college and require remedial courses in basic areas. Retention and graduation rates are low. With fewer than 700 students living on campus, CSU Dominguez Hills serves a commuter population, comprised of students who are primarily part time.

During the last several years, CSU Dominguez Hills effected a major and unprecedented reorganization of its academic structure, devolving one large college into several smaller colleges. The campus coupled this reorganization with the hiring of several new deans and the development of an academic master plan aimed at framing the academic course of the campus. In addition, the plan outlines the need to initiate new programs which are responsive to current students and the communities the campus serves. The Academic Master Plan also requires the assessment of existing programs.

Programs that the campus will be developing are listed as

- Bachelor of Science in Sports, Entertainment, and Hospitality Management (2006-07)
- Master of Arts in Communication Disorders (2006-07)
- Master in Social Work (2006-07)

- Master of Science in Computer Science (2006-07)
- Bachelor of Arts in Negotiation, Conflict Resolution and Peace Building (2006-07)
- Bachelor of Arts in Child and Adolescent Development (2007-08)
- Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science (2007-08)

All of these are currently on track for approval or have been launched, with the following exceptions. The BS in Sports, Entertainment, and Hospitality Management has been changed to a concentration within Business Administration and the MA in Communication Disorders which the campus decided not to offer as the degree needs to be reconfigured to serve contemporary students.

Through the Academic Master Plan, the campus has been able to achieve more balance in its academic programming, and despite the severe budgetary constraints, the campus has hired the faculty necessary to launch these programs. Consistent with the mission statement, and the values of the campus, the newly approved programs are designed to be attractive to the student clientele.

The clear intent is to provide the academic programs that meet the needs and interests of today's students. For example, the campus has introduced a course (University 101) aimed at teaching first time and at-risk freshman how to succeed in college. Because of budgetary difficulties, the course is taught – gratis – by senior administrators, including the Provost. This is a potent example of the campus's commitment to its students.

Fiscal, Physical and Information Resources

Fiscal and physical resources appear to be properly aligned with institutional commitments to educational endeavors. Special commendation should be given for the strong and pervading commitment from the entire community for their structured methods of resource allocation that involves solid institutional planning and outcomes-driven decision-making. The budget development process is open and led by the University Budget Committee. (CFR 3.4)

The University Budget Committee (UBC), chaired by a faculty member, is the vehicle used to review divisional performance and recommend allocations (or reductions) to the President. The committee's recommendations, vetted with the University Planning Committee (UPC), are based on compliance with the campus's priorities as defined through the strategic plan. The overarching goal is to fund activities that will enhance student success. The process is transparent and well documented.

The UBC's work is guided by program reviews and Program Effectiveness Assessment Tools (PEAT). Through the Academic Master Plan, the campus has been able to achieve more balance in its academic programming, and despite

the severe budgetary constraints, the campus has hired the faculty necessary to launch these programs. Consistent with the mission statement, and the values of the campus, the newly approved programs are designed to be attractive to the student clientele.

The goal to evaluate programs has also been realized. Each year the Academic Affairs Program Effectiveness Committee looks at basic indicators for all 70 of their programs. The PEAT identifies 30 quantitative indicators, including specific faculty and student indicators listed below. The data are then rolled up into program reviews.

Faculty

Number and FTE produced

Sections taught by full-time lecturers or tenure track faculty

Success of searches

Grant proposals, conference presentations, publications and creative work

Service on committees

Students

Number and distribution

Retention

Time to degree

Unit loads

Test scores

Every third year, the committee looks at additional indicators of quality, and every sixth year, the program is fully reviewed, with an outside evaluator coming to campus to comment on the program. To date, the Program Review Panel has been able to keep up with this ambitious schedule for reviews. When asked what they were gleaned from the program reviews, the committee was unsure; however, they did believe that the indicators being used are appropriate and that the reports are providing useful information. The program reviews are passed along to the deans who can, within their budgetary constraints, use the reviews to guide resource allocation. Unfortunately, recommendations from outside reviewers and program reviews have not necessarily been implemented due to budgetary constraints.

The next step is for CSU Dominguez Hills to determine what constitutes quality and progress within a program. (CFR 3.3) They have accomplished this with their five-year study of the Nelson Denny reading results. In 1998 and 1999 the study determined that 43% of the students tested fell below college reading level. Four years after securing grant funds, designing campus projects to enhance reading, writing, and critical thinking, and training faculty, they tested another group of students and found that 63% were reading above college level. Faculty have begun to take advantage of the rich research and development opportunities associated with investigating how programming can support

student academic development and progress. Presentations at conferences and publication submissions have helped to chronicle the campus effort and results. These documented efforts to improve quality are critical to conveying the accomplishments at CSU Dominguez Hills.

From the student vantage point, the campus offers small classes and an accessible faculty. These two characteristics were cited enthusiastically by a broad range of students. Stories of professors initiating student contact outside classroom time by taking an hour to discuss personal issues, recommending a graduate school or working on a research project, were plentiful in our student interactions.

Less glowing were the students' assessments of academic rigor. Some students thought that expectations were set too low. These students felt that they were not sufficiently challenged in the classroom, although many also indicated that they learned a great deal from internships or on-campus jobs making them more competitive for jobs after graduation. Students at the upper end of the academic spectrum do receive significant attention at CSU Dominguez Hills. Data on applications to graduate school and success in graduate school are spotty but help to document this path for able students. At least one student in the honors program felt that students had to take the responsibility to challenge the professor.

The campus has a very tight budget, and has had to reduce budgets in the last three fiscal cycles. The cuts began when fewer students enrolled and despite recent enrollment increases, including over 1,000 new freshmen, enrollment continues to be less than budgeted. The campus is dependent upon a combination of state funds and student fee revenues to support the core academic programs, services and administration of the campus. State funding, which is allocated to the campus from the Chancellor's Office, is based on student FTEs and ignores the very real workload that is generated by the actual number – headcount – of enrolled students.

The campus has taken advertent steps to manage its budget situation. One example has been the centralization of IT services – primarily desktop support and consolidation of servers - resulting in budgetary savings of about \$350,000. The President has also been able to utilize Foundation resources resulting from the Foundation's partnership with the Home Depot Center (described below), providing one-time funds to offset budget cuts resulting from lower than budgeted enrollments.

Funding for the Cal State system is understandably tied to the number of students being educated. Elaborate formulas documenting the state's contribution to the Cal State system have evolved over the years. As the enrollment at CSU Dominguez Hills has been decreasing, the funding to run the campus has decreased significantly, resulting most recently in a budgetary

reduction of over \$2 million. One can imagine that such circumstances might lead (a) to decreased morale, (b) to staff, faculty, and administrators looking for more favorable circumstances, and (c) to the stalling of campus efforts to move forward. Instead, the WASC team found a committed and passionate group of administrative leaders and an energizing of campus efforts to move forward. Some of these efforts are mentioned briefly to document the creative solutions the campus has pursued.

Distance Learning Programs. These programs are strong and have been extremely well received by the students. On the WASC e-mail line that had been set up for the visit, the team received laudatory student responses from as far away as Cambodia and Malta. Locally, the students were equally enthusiastic. The students' fervor is noteworthy, but of equal importance is the fact that these programs are tightly integrated with academic departments and, as such, maintain appropriate academic standards.

Home Depot Center: By leasing campus land to the Home Depot to build an activity Center, and then sharing revenue, the campus has ensured that a growing revenue stream will be part of its future. Perhaps as important, the highly visible activities at the center, including motocross, tennis, concerts, graduation exercises etc., will ensure that the local community becomes familiar with the Cal State Dominguez Hills campus. Both the revenue stream and the marketing value of the Home Depot Center are just beginning to be understood.

Grants and Contract Activity: The campus last year brought in \$12M in outside contracts and grants. Some of these, such as the Department of Education grants, provide critical student services and help fund such programs as the first year learning experience. As one faculty member pointed out, ensuring the success of the student population at CSU Dominguez Hills requires a broad array of student services. Yet, the budget cuts mean there are few resources for these programs.

University Planning Committee: In an era of reduced resources, the administration has made sure that the budgetary process is transparent. This is critical to campus morale. Although very large, the University Planning Committee helps assure that budgetary planning and resource allocation issues are resolved by a broad and representative group.

New Buildings: Indications that the campus is looking forward can be gleaned from their building program. The Home Depot Center is complete (along with newly constructed athletic fields), a student union which is double the size of the former union is in the finishing stages, a new addition to the library is being planned if the November bond measure passes, and plans for increased student housing are being discussed

along with numerous improvements to classroom buildings, all efforts that will make the campus more accessible and viable. Students complain about the lack of campus life. In a time when the campus was largely a commuter campus and students arrived in time for evening classes and left immediately afterward, this was less of an issue. With an increasing number of traditional freshmen, the lack of campus housing and campus life had to be addressed. Both the Home Depot Center and the new union should help the campus respond to these complaints.

One cannot leave the budget discussion without mentioning the students' views of resource allocation. Although students have been invited to participate in all of the committees dealing with resource allocation, they have not generally taken advantage of the opportunity. Their lack of knowledge of the budgetary constraints impacting the campus probably influences their view of how resources are used, but they clearly resent the allocation of student fees to projects that they believe should have been funded from other sources.

Informational technology systems provide support to the educational and administrative needs of the community. During recent budget shortfalls, the IT area has had to consolidate its structure, leading to a more centralized system of operating and servicing the campus needs. Plans for technology replacement have been altered with current practices focusing on general fund allocations and one-time resource opportunities. Instructional technology goals appear to lag behind educational classroom needs, although every effort is made to secure additional funds to support instructional technology. The plans are in place although the budget to realize those plans is lacking. Commitment and creativity are apparent, but can only provide a framework for enhancement, not the necessary funds to fulfill the instructional needs. (CFR 3.7)

Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes

The institution's decision-making structures have been effective and represent significant commitments from all aspects of the faculty, staff and administration. Most major decisions are linked to institutional planning, with sufficient evidence to support both process and outcomes. (CFR 3.8)

Commendation should be given to the work of the University Foundation, its leaders and support staff. Their commitment to serve the students is laudable and further strengthens the institution-wide dedication to mission and vision. The goals to improve the institutional endowment through gifts and partnerships are an important aspect for additional streams of revenue. The team noted that collaborative efforts between the foundation and University Advancement should produce additional opportunities to engage the community in fund raising efforts. When linked to the institutional mission, a compelling argument can be presented for supporting the students and faculty. (CFR 3.8)

Despite the budget reductions of the past three years, Dominguez Hills is clearly a campus that is moving forward. The leadership team is effective and has put in place the structure to promote broad based consensus. The administrative team, the staff, and the faculty all share the common goal of promoting student success.

Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement

Strategic Thinking and Planning

In 2002, in response to a set of recommendations, the CSU Dominguez Hills campus developed – and has since implemented – a complex organizational infrastructure. The process began with the development of a campus-wide strategic plan. It was difficult to discern, prior to meeting with members of the committee, the effectiveness of the structure. The face-to-face meetings with committee representatives did, however, make clear the structure and the process.

The committee structure has proved quite useful to the campus in developing and implementing (including monitoring and tracking) the campus-wide strategic plan, as well as the more localized plans such as the academic master plan, the IT plan, and the enrollment management plan. At this juncture, however, CSU Dominguez Hills collectively recognizes the need to streamline the committee structure and eliminate overlap and redundancies. This is to be commended.

The planning processes at Dominguez Hills are outstanding. Broadly representative teams have been formed and empowered to gather and analyze data, utilize those data for decision-making, and hold each other accountable for specified goals and objectives. Special commendation should be given to the Enrollment Management Policy Council and the Strategic Planning Oversight Committee for their excellent teamwork and professional commitments to achieve desired goals, sometimes through individual sacrifice. The collaborative actions between divisions are an excellent role model for other institutions. (CFR 4.2, 4.3, 4.7, 4.8)

Commitment to Learning and Improvement

Through a complex system of university-wide committees, the institution has developed a clear process for ensuring quality at every level. Programs are required to prepare annual reports of progress, new proposals are evaluated by groups that are committed to marketing to their constituents, advisory boards are in place in some colleges to better link the community to the educational vision, and surveys are conducted to determine graduate effectiveness. These are just

examples of some of the processes that are in place to assist the university in determining goal attainment. (CFR 4.4) However, there are some areas of concern that became evident to the Team during the visit. Although the institution has gathered much data related to the aforementioned goals and objectives, there is not substantial evidence to support the notion that the evidence is analyzed expeditiously and directly utilized for critical decision-making, specifically in the area of educational effectiveness. Although the focus of the next site visit will be upon measuring aspects of educational effectiveness, the Team realizes that much work is yet to be accomplished in this critical area.

The Team found a leadership that is fully committed to educational excellence, success for all students and a collaborative spirit that surpasses expectations. The academic and institutional leaders have formed an effective team to support the educational environment, in spite of several set backs and financial challenges.(CFR 4.6) In many instances, broad dialog and information is gathered from stakeholders who share in the academic vision of the institution. However, it is unclear as to the utilization of these data in influencing the policies, guidelines and procedures for enhancing academic excellence.

III Major Findings and TEAM Recommendations

Since the last accreditation visit, the campus has been transformed on many levels. The academic programs have been revamped; the faculty has been expanded and rejuvenated, the provost and all of the deans have turned over, the character of the student body has changed, research and scholarly activity have been included among the strategic goals of the campus and the physical plant has expanded substantially. A campus-wide planning process has been the source of a plethora of new initiatives and programs to serve students. Campus planning efforts have focused the attention of the campus on three of the four issues singled out for this review—academic quality, campus change, and diversity. In this report, we have documented these transformations to provide insight into the current status of the campus. Our job now is to try to distill all of the initiatives, changes, and innovations into useful recommendations for the campus and the upcoming review of educational effectiveness.

Recommendation 1. Data Collection and Analysis. Data collection on the many initiatives the campus has undertaken has advanced at a rapid pace and is available for nearly all program efforts. The Team suggests that now is the time for analysis of the data and reflection on the results. Such analysis and reflection should help identify and celebrate program success and single out areas for continuing improvement.

Preparation for the Educational Effectiveness visit should include analysis of those initiatives that are directed toward the achievement for each of the four themes. It would be useful to have concrete evidence of the increased emphasis

on inter-actional diversity that highlights curricular and instructional enhancements, programming in student affairs, and in transformational efforts of selected academic departments. Data that includes learning outcomes would also help the campus decide on directions and allocation of resources.

The Institutional Research position is currently vacant. This position could serve as a clearinghouse and coordinating office for all assessment and evidence gathering related to institutional effectiveness.

Additional evidence should be gathered and analyzed that link institutional outcomes to University mission and vision through the strategic planning process. Some data exist at divisional and department levels, but institution-wide evidence would strengthen the linkage between vision and operations.

Teamwork for enhancing student enrollment is outstanding, although improved methods to predict long-range targets would benefit planning and outreach strategies. Similarly a systematic review of student progress through various courses that impact retention, would provide another avenue for improving student support and retention. Given the decline in enrollments, analyses of recruitment and retention initiatives should be given priority.

The team noted a strong participatory approach to assessment and program review. Student outcome assessment activity is really taken seriously, resulting in a cultural change on the campus in recent years regarding the utility of learning outcome assessments at the course and departmental levels. Program Review and Assessment of Student Learning should be continued with an eye toward demonstrating effectiveness of programs through analysis of student work.

To assist in the expansion of the diversity efforts, the Team recommends that the campus develop a variety of assessments for educational effectiveness that will capture the richness of the CSU Dominguez Hills' experience and better tell their story. One example would be to gather data on entering students who are the first in their families to attend college. Student engagement data currently collected may also provide documentation of how the campus effectively reaches its diverse student population. While some data from an EOP survey exists, the nature and scope of this aspect of diversity among the students and how effectively the campus responds is relatively unknown. Additional evidence of this kind may be useful for identifying needs and influencing programs and policies.

Recommendation 2. Including Students in the Consensus Building.

Students celebrate the strong bonds they have with faculty. At the same time they do not feel that the administration has been sufficiently responsive to their needs. Student Government members in particular are concerned that they bear a disproportionate financial burden for programming in areas that the campus

has identified as critical. Examples include technology, diversity programming and student activities funding for academic department programming. It appears that the student have less knowledge of the budget circumstances than other members of the community. While that is to be expected, it is critical to have their buy-in to the short-term and long-term solutions. Increased involvement of students in the committee structures of the campus is recommended and increased communication, particularly about resource issues. A campus administration and faculty as dedicated to student success as CSU Dominguez Hills, should build upon those efforts by keeping students informed and able to appreciate the efforts taken on their behalf.

Recommendation 3. Documenting Follow-Through. Many efforts are underway and the campus should be ready to document follow-through on the various programmatic, diversity, and quality issues that have been started. For example, the Educational Effectiveness team will look for the launch of programs that have been planned and are in the approval process. Efforts to streamline the planning committee process should be documented. The institution of the intensive writing courses should be complete. And other plans underway should be brought to fruition.

At CSU Dominguez Hills, one sees the future of California and the direction in which higher education must move. The challenges are many, the path is not always clearly marked, and resources are in short supply. Dominguez Hills is grappling effectively with those challenges and the Team hopes that this report will help them pursue the goals they have so carefully outlined.