

**REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM
EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW**

To California State University, Northridge

September 14-16, 2011

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Reaffirmation of Accreditation

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

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REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM

Educational Effectiveness Review
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SECTION I. OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

IA. Description of the Institution and Visit

Institutional Background

Founded in 1958, California State University, Northridge (CSUN) is the second largest university in the 23 campus California State University system. It offers 69 bachelor's degrees, 57 masters degrees and 28 credential programs to a student population of over 35,000 on a 356 acre campus in Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley. Thirty-two off-site locations extend the reach of the university west to Santa Barbara, south to Long Beach, north to Lancaster, and east to Chino. According to its web site, CSUN's mission is to enable students to realize their educational goals (CFR 1.1). Its first priority is to promote the welfare and intellectual progress of students (CFR 1.1).

Over its history CSUN's focus and student population have changed significantly. Its original purpose was to serve the regional training needs of "the Valley" in fields such as business, nursing and education. Its student population at the time was virtually all-white and largely male. Today the student population is one of the most diverse in the nation, with CSUN having been named a Hispanic-serving institution in 1998. While the campus still serves regional employment needs, it now also offers discipline-based education in traditional areas (e.g., Philosophy, English Literature and Biology) as well as ethnically-focused disciplines (e.g., Pan African Studies, Chicana/o Studies, and Jewish Studies). A particular emphasis is in improving K-12 education. But perhaps the most dramatic change at CSUN involves its recent commitment to student learning. Over the past several years, CSUN has transformed itself to the

point where student learning is a priority in every degree program and even in programs that occur outside the classroom (CFR 1.1; 1.2).

These dramatic changes have occurred while the institution has faced unprecedented challenges of a physical and financial nature. In 1994, the institution suffered \$400 million in damage from an earthquake of magnitude 6.7. As of 2007, the rebuilding and upgrading of the institution's infrastructure was complete. The financial challenges stemming from reductions and uncertainty in state funding have, if anything, worsened since the national economic crisis in 2008. Despite these challenges, CSUN remains focused on not merely surviving but on improving the quality of the education it provides in significant ways.

Accreditation History

Originally named San Fernando Valley State College, the institution received its first accreditation in February 1960. Since then the institution (renamed California State University, Northridge in 1972) has had a strong history of accreditation and engagement with WASC. CSUN's last reaffirmation of WASC accreditation occurred in 2000.

Subsequent to its last reaccreditation, CSUN was approved for "fast-track" status for all Substantive Change proposals (25+ miles off-campus and online) in June 2005; this status was renewed in January 2010 for a period of 5 years. In the past ten years, CSUN has received approval for a number of on-campus, distance education, and off-campus programs including:

- (1) an online MS in Engineering Management (2002);
- (2) an off-campus BA in Public Sector Management in both Lancaster and Santa Barbara (2003);
- (3) an off campus BS in Construction Management Technology in Ventura County (2004);

- (4) a distance education BA in Public Sector Management in Santa Maria (2004);
- (5) an off-campus MPA program in Santa Barbara (2004);
- (6) an off-campus MPA cohort in the City of Industry (2005);
- (7) a distance learning Global MA in Knowledge Management (2007);
- (8) MPA cohorts in Chino and Ventura (2007);
- (9) an EdD in Educational Leadership (2008);
- (10) MPA cohorts in Los Angeles and Pasadena (2008);
- (11) an MA in Educational Administration at several off-campus locations (2009);
- (12) an off-campus MPA cohort in Los Angeles (2009);
- (13) off-campus MPA cohorts in Inglewood and Norwalk (2010);¹
- (14) an off-campus Master of Social Work cohort in City of Industry (2010);²
- (15) a distance education Masters in Assistive Technology Studies and Human Services (2011).³

The current accreditation cycle was initiated in October 2007 with CSUN's submission of its Institutional Proposal to the WASC Commission on Accreditation. The three thematic areas included in the Proposal: 1) Student Success through Engagement in Learning, 2) Faculty and Staff Support for University Success, and 3) Learning as an Institution provided the focus of the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) report submitted to WASC in November 2009. The CPR site visit occurred on February 3-5, 2010. The results of that visit are described later in this document.

¹ Substantive change action since last accreditation visit.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

The Educational Effectiveness Review (EER)

The EER began with CSUN's submission of an EER report in June 2011, followed by a WASC team visit to California State University, Northridge that occurred from September 14-16, 2011. During the visit the team met with a variety of administrators, faculty, staff and students. All were very candid in their responses to team questions and together provided all the information the team needed for a thorough EER review (CFR 1.9). The team also wants to acknowledge the CSUN president and her leadership team for their openness to team questioning and their willingness to provide a clear sense of CSUN's current situation and vision for the future. The team also wants to give special thanks to the ALO for a well-planned visit during which every request the team made was promptly attended to. Finally, the team wants to thank the WASC liaison for preparing the team for the visit and for expertly shepherding the team through the process.

IB. The Institution's Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) Report

Alignment with the Proposal

The organization of the EER report varies from the Institutional Proposal, but only in terms of the sequence in which the three themes are discussed. CSUN felt that Theme 3, Learning as an Institution should be presented first, reasoning that learning as an institution is the foundation for student success. As a result, this team report also discusses Theme 3 first. The content also incorporates recommendations that resulted from the CPR review and visit.

Quality and Rigor of the Review and Report

The EER report gave the visiting team a good sense of the progress made since the CPR visit in regard to each of the three themes: Learning as an Institution, Student Success through Engagement in Learning, and Faculty and Staff Support for University Success. It also provided

a clear picture of the university leadership's commitment to the assessment of learning outcomes and the assessment of the effectiveness of co-curricular and academic support programs (CFR 1.3). The description of program review, especially in regard to the limited use of learning outcomes assessment as a basis for program improvement, gave the team the sense that program review is still a work in progress (CFR 1.9).

IC. Response to Issues Raised in the Capacity and Preparatory Review

In a letter to President Jolene Koester, WASC President and Executive Director Ralph Wolff summarized the findings and deliberations of the Accrediting Commission of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges regarding the report of the team conducting the CPR visit to CSUN on February 3- 5, 2010. In his letter, President Wolff emphasized three recommendations: 1) protect and develop certain areas of student support especially services for transfer students and access to courses needed for graduation; 2) continue to work on improving graduation and retention rates, and 3) continue to evaluate the areas of advancement and information technology systems to insure the alignment of institutional and financial planning. In response to the first recommendation, several steps have been taken to improve access to courses, and a spring 2011 colloquium on transfer student needs has started a campus conversation on how programs and services for that population can be improved. Regarding the second recommendation, the concerted effort to improve graduation rates that began ten years ago has paid dividends in the form of an improvement in the overall freshman graduation rate as well as a reduction in the gap in the graduation rates of under-served and better-served student groups (CFR 1.5). Transfer students have also benefited from many of the programmatic changes made as a result of this effort.

Thus, as described in more detail below, CSUN has made excellent progress in regard to the first two recommendations. While the third recommendation received somewhat less attention during the 18 months between the CPR and the EER, the campus has excellent plans in place to improve the advancement function. In addition, they continue to monitor the balance between centralized and decentralized information technology services and the team was quite impressed with the approach of the IT group.

SECTION II. Evaluation of Institutional Educational Effectiveness under the Standards

IIA. Evaluation of the Institution's Educational Effectiveness Inquiry

1. Theme 3: Learning as an Institution

In order to demonstrate Learning as an Institution CSUN examined three campus-wide initiatives undertaken since the last accreditation in 2000 and conducted extensive case studies of each initiative. The initiatives were selected by the campus because they focused on important areas for progress and also because they were deemed successful, an important component from which to learn. The three initiatives focused on graduation rates, general education, and finally the development of a campus master plan.

The CPR report contained the initial findings of the case studies that CSUN had conducted. The visiting team for the CPR recommended that CSUN further ground its case studies in both the methodology of case study review and, ideally, the literature about large universities and or organizations in general. The EER report thoroughly documents a case study approach that was used and the specific methodology used for each case. As is detailed below, the CSUN EER finds that CSUN plans after consultation, implements collaboratively after planning, uses multiple measures, and focuses on student learning and graduation (CFR 4.1; 4.3). The team concurs with this conclusion.

The CSUN narrative begins with the work of the Graduation Rates Task Force (GRTF) established in February of 2001. Interviews with individuals involved revealed several problems with two previous efforts to improve graduation rates. Specifically, CSUN found that previous efforts lacked clarity around their goals and did not have strong leadership from the administration or the faculty, particularly when it came to changing GE, the bread and butter of many departments. These two challenges were enough to stall any forward momentum. But the GRTF marked a change in tone as well as in the level of productivity.

The work of the GRTF in particular appears to have changed the culture of the institution such that cross divisional work was not only accepted but rather it was expected. The three case studies together continually emphasize that CSUN has learned the critical role of working with others especially those who may have diverse perspectives on the issue at hand.

The graduation rates task force initiative resulted in several changes to policy and more importantly marked the beginning of a noteworthy increase in graduation rates for the campus. The second case study examined efforts to improve general education (GE). While initial efforts in 1994 and 1999 were unsuccessful, the 2003 to 2005 reform resulted in a new general education program in a time frame of only 18 months. CSUN's case study of the GE effort found that, like the GRTF effort, the GE effort was successful because of clear goals and objectives that were established by administration and the willingness of faculty to take a strong leadership role (CFR 3.11). The faculty governance process was utilized and all parties believe the process was open, transparent, and consultative as CSUN suggests at the beginning of their essay.

The final effort studied is the development of the campus master plan which involved extensive consultation with the community immediately around the campus. CSUN argues that

major campus projects had been controversial prior to 2000. The large number of projects completed within the last three to four years, including five new buildings adding significantly to the campus and the community, suggest a peaceful coexistence. The most recent project to open, the Valley Performing Arts Center, provides facilities for use by the community at large, not simply the campus.

For all three of these efforts the interviews conducted by CSUN with the original participants and stakeholders found that processes for planning were inclusive, transparent, and expeditious. Implementation of recommendations seemed to follow rapidly from planning. Theme 1, discussed later in this report, details the student success that has come about as a result of changes in the General Education program as well as changes resulting from the Graduation Rates Task Force.

In reflecting on its own learning process, and more deeply analyzing these three initiatives, CSUN identified six characteristics that appear to be common across the three initiatives:

1. Clear objectives with an aggressive time frame of one to two years.
2. A cross-section of individuals from across the campus who are interested, committed, and ideally experienced in working together.
3. Engagement with stakeholders, particularly those that may have diverse viewpoints.
4. Support from the administration for the initiative itself as well as the allocation of sufficient resources to accomplish the goal.
5. Open communication to secure buy-in for the process and its objectives.
6. Structures that allow processes to move efficiently.

These findings are consistent with the literature about effective group processes and organizational change.⁴ The culture change necessary to tackle these types of initiatives appears to have been sustained over the last ten years. But it is further reflected in two more recent efforts: 1) a general education governance task force established in 2009 to determine how GE should be governed at CSUN, and 2) an update of the myNorthridge student portal. Both of these more recent efforts necessitated cooperation between administrators, staff, faculty and especially between the offices of student affairs, academic affairs, and information technology. Both the GE task force and the myNorthridge portal efforts have structures similar to the successful efforts discussed previously.

CSUN has done a credible job of documenting, through interviews and documents, the important factors in the success of the initiatives discussed above. Perhaps most important is CSUN's demonstration of the capacity for self-reflection. The institution appears to have established a culture of working collaboratively across divisions to solve problems in the best interest of supporting the educational outcomes of students (CFR 1.6).

In summary, CSUN suggests that there are several critical components to the success of large scale reforms such as those previously undertaken. Clear objectives, support from the university leadership, collaboration, clear processes, adequate resources, communication and feedback, and dissemination of results are all vital to success (CFR 1.3). While these process-related steps are important for development of ideas and policies, proper implementation is critical. The results of the first two initiatives that CSUN reviewed speak for themselves, with significantly improved graduation rates and a streamlined general education program both

⁴ Bryson, John. 2004. "Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement," 3rd Edition. Jossey Bass: San Francisco.

providing benefits to students. Campus master planning has literally paved the way for significant improvements to CSUN's infrastructure.

In the words of CSUN's senior leadership, becoming a learning-centered institution requires first a culture that works collaboratively, takes risks, allows for failure in the process of learning to be more successful, and does not penalize innovative thought. Huge as this undertaking may be, it is only the beginning. Resources need be marshaled to invest in the right places and, for a campus of this size, in sizable amounts. And then data must be painstakingly collected and analyzed, allowing for evidence-based decision making. It is clear to the team that CSUN has made considerable progress on many dimensions of being a learning institution.

The next steps are within reach but will require sustained effort and direction. Particularly in the area of use of student learning outcomes, the team noted unevenness in full implementation. While all of the programs have clear learning outcomes, the use of measures to assess progress towards outcomes is uneven. This showed up in the team's assessment of CSUN's Program Review process and also in conversations with faculty about how they are using SLO's to learn about their own progress and make changes. When prompted, many could discuss effective changes they have made which are consistent with overall goals of improving student learning, retention and graduation. However the evidence cited as the basis for the changes was sometimes anecdotal rather than based in systematic learning outcomes data.

While the team was somewhat puzzled about this initially, on reflection we came to understand that this is a natural evolution of the deep embedding of honest and appropriate assessment methods into the institution. The campus has avoided the temptation to impose one size fits all assessments such as requiring that all departments measure the same items. Rather, the leadership is allowing individual departments the time they need to understand, develop and

then fully implement assessments that are meaningful. That said, the momentum must be sustained. The team encountered faculty that confess to being simply too stretched fully to attend to the business of assessment, or worse, to have allowed the department assessment liaison to carry the burden. Finding entry points to leverage meaningful participation on the part of more individuals will be critical for the assessment processes to become and remain locally generated and owned.

While planning itself is rarely considered in the EER report, two planning efforts are noteworthy as they further demonstrate learning as an institution. CSUN's understanding of the power of planning seems to be extremely sophisticated. The university has fully integrated the notion of proactive and strategic planning to better position itself for an uncertain future. As a large public institution in an extremely fluid financial environment, with technology changes occurring at a rapid pace, CSUN has chosen to think somewhat longer-term about finances and technology (CFR 4.2).

While CSUN continues to search for more strategic ways to reallocate funds internally and to identify financial efficiencies for the benefit of students, the administration and campus are increasingly aware that CSUN cannot limit itself to current sources of funding. To that end, they report actively exploring alternative sources of external funding. A similar effort is underway to strategically consider the core directions for the campus' information technology efforts. A confidential draft of a five-year plan given to the team reflected a cutting-edge vision for the future and laid out how resource dollars could be better-utilized with the end goal of student success.

Both the financial and information technology planning efforts are directly tied to freeing and better managing resources with the ultimate goal of improving student learning and success

(CFR 4.2). In discussions with campus faculty and staff, references were continually made to pilot projects designed to enhance student learning and/or student success. In one current example, CSUN is testing new ways of allocating financial aid packages to increase students' motivation to accelerate their time-to-degree. Another example is the use of "thin client" technology to increase innovative IT solutions. This technology provides an inexpensive and low maintenance approach that gives IT developers more time to innovate. One solution recently developed in this manner has enabled Masters students to submit their theses electronically. Stemming directly from plans to engage these efforts, the pilots reflect a sophistication that is the embodiment of living planning: Long-term overarching plans exist as a general guideline and the campus is continually trying new approaches, assessing those approaches to evaluate their effectiveness, and seeking to free resources to fund the most valuable efforts.

One indicator that a learning organization has achieved a sophisticated level of maturity is that they are open not only to change based on sound evidence, but also to changes in the evidence-gathering process itself. The team noted an excellent example of this in the progress of student learning outcome development and use in programs. While 19 of 67 programs have changed curricular elements as a result of their findings from annual assessments, 24 programs have made changes to their assessment plans or instruments as a result of conducting assessments. This demonstrates a realization on the part of the campus that meaningful assessment often requires several passes at the instrument before it provides the type of information being sought. In the case of an academic institution, changing assessment plans may well mean that results that can be utilized even as a baseline, are deferred for an entire year. A learning institution recognizes that knowing what one wants to learn is a critical first step.

Patience with development of student learning outcomes that have meaning for the users, the extensive array of pilot projects, and stories of what is no longer being done because evidence proved ineffective, all document an organization that recognizes it must know how to learn before it can undertake meaningful learning that will result in the right kinds of change to affect the desired outcome. The case studies themselves document both substantive focus on core educational issues and the process of learning how to learn. CSUN's efforts in this arena are commendable.

2. Theme 1: Student Success through Engagement in Learning

CSUN has a long-standing concern about providing students with the most effective approaches for enhancing learning and engagement. Toward this end, the University has implemented a series of improvements to academic advising, enhanced electronic technologies and new initiatives to foster student retention and learning, particularly among first-year students. In the EER, CSUN documents the university's exploration of the factors and initiatives that have been implemented and their contribution to increased student success through engagement in learning (CFR 2.5).

CSUN is especially committed to understanding and ensuring success for the particular types of students who enter the institution. The institution has developed a comprehensive portrait of the demographic and preparatory profile of its entering students and has used this information to guide program development, tailor practices and develop specific initiatives to improve persistence and graduation. Of particular note is the high percentage (about 60%) of first-year students who now begin their CSUN undergraduate education as the first in their family to attend college and frequently need remediation in math, English, or both.⁵ These

⁵ The first generation statistic was based on recent CSUN freshman surveys.

entering student characteristics are critical factors in student persistence and graduation rates. Therefore, it is significant that the University identified the improved graduation rates of first-time, first-year students over the last decade (1999-2010) as evidence of educational effectiveness (CFR 2.10).

Persistence, graduation, and time-to-degree rates are national and state policy concerns, and are high on the agenda for all U.S. colleges and universities. The CSU system launched specific initiatives in 2010 to improve graduation rates by 8% by 2016. CSUN identified graduation concerns long before that, and has made progress on increasing success rates. The extent to which CSUN has taken student success concerns seriously is found in their evidence of changes in persistence and graduation rates over the last decade. Specifically, the one-year retention rate of first-year students entering CSUN during the fall 1999-2008 period describes an arc that began at 70%, rose to 76% for the cohorts entering in the 2004-05 period, and then fell off, ending up at 71% for the Fall 2008 entry cohort. However, the rate bounced back to 74% for the fall 2009 entry cohort.⁶ Furthermore, the six-year graduation rates of these first-year student entry cohorts have risen dramatically, almost doubling from 25% for the Fall 1995 entrants to 47% for Fall 2004 entrants.⁷

Over this period, CSUN has also paid particular attention to gaps in key success indicators based on race/ethnicity. For example, with the exception of the cohorts entering during the 2000-03 period, the continuation rate of first-year students from traditionally underserved backgrounds (Black, Latino, and Native American) lagged that of students from better served backgrounds by at least six points. In addition the six-year graduation rates of traditionally underserved students lagged those of students from better served backgrounds

⁶ Undergraduate Persistence at Cal State Northridge during the Last Decade, 2011.

⁷ Ibid.

throughout the period. However, more recently the traditionally underserved and “better served” six-year graduation rates grew at approximately the same rate, and the gap between them held steady at 13 points.⁸ Overall, first time, first-year students graduating from CSUN during the 2000s have considerably improved their persistence to degree, with traditionally under-served students making particular strides. Upper division transfer students completing their studies during the first year of the decade displayed a high level of performance, again with underserved and better served students performing equally well.

Reports comparing the persistence rates of various undergraduate groups, which display CSUN figures with comparable percentages and rates for three CSU campus groupings – the system as a whole, other large CSU campuses, and other Los Angeles Basin campuses – show that CSUN’s new students are as likely to persist into a second year of study as those at other Basin campuses, but somewhat less likely than first year students at other large campuses or in the CSU as a whole. In addition, in comparison to other CSU campuses, CSUN’s male students, Latino/a and white students are disproportionately likely to continue into a second year of study. Additional results provide important comparative information for considering lingering concerns about first year retention, remediation needs, transfer success rates, and overall graduation rates among underserved students.⁹ Finally, recognition of CSUN’s achievements earned it recognition as a “gap closer,” meaning that it had not only improved its graduation rate, but also reduced the graduation rate gap by half (CFR 2.10).¹⁰

CSUN’s thoughtful analysis of institutional results, including an understanding of entering student characteristics and needs and an attention to tracking and closing graduation rate

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Reported in *Student Success at Cal State Northridge: A Comparative Perspective on the Persistence of Selected Undergraduate Groups*, 2009.

¹⁰ The Education Trust, *Top Gap Closers in Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities*, 2010.

gaps, demonstrates an area of exceptional practice within the institution. Institutional research reports¹¹ and a data inventory created and maintained by the university's Office of Institutional Research, display high quality evidence, in-depth analysis, and clear interpretation. (CR 4.4;4.5)

Gains in CSUN's graduation rates are attributed to a series of initiatives implemented over the last decade. The Graduation Rates Task Force (GRTF) established in 2001 provided a major catalyst and key leadership to addressing the challenge of improving degree completion early in the decade. The GRTF was guided by institutional data and also research-based practice on what works to increase graduation rates. More recently, institutional results clearly indicated that some students who were not making timely progress to degree were also amassing units beyond the number required for graduation. CSUN tackled these issues directly by contacting students who amassed sufficient credit hours but had not filed a degree plan or earned their degree to address their particular graduation challenges. An initiative to foster graduation among seniors who have accumulated 130 units, but have not submitted paperwork to graduate, involved giving these students notice of their need to use degree progress software (MAP) to plan their last semester(s), meet with an advisor, and submit appropriate documents. Efforts proved effective, with more students having graduation checks in place, and dramatic reductions in the number of seniors in this situation over the last three years. Even more, beginning in 2010, CSUN adopted an administrative graduation policy for students who accumulated over 140 earned units; upon review by the Office of Undergraduate Studies, these students are graduated administratively if they have completed all of the degree requirements in any major. CSUN also tightened policies regarding financial aid, limiting financial aid units to no more than 150 and stiffening policies on what constitutes Satisfactory Academic Progress needed to

¹¹Examples include a multi-year analysis report titled, *Undergraduate Persistence at Cal State Northridge During the Last Decade*, *Student Success at Cal State Northridge: A Comparative Perspective on the Persistence of Selected Undergraduate Groups*,

continue receiving financial aid.¹² The policies were changed to keep the importance of course completion and progress to degree foremost in student's minds (CFR 2.13).

In addition, CSUN provides students clear and easy to understand information about the real and opportunity costs of extending time to graduation. This information helps students better understand the consequences of withdrawing from courses, taking minimum credit hour loads each term, and other practices that can stall graduation. The Financial Aid office for example, includes logical graphics to demonstrate additional costs of delaying graduation including debt accrued through new borrowing each term and loss of income from full-time employment for each additional term.¹³ These efforts help students understand the importance of graduating in a timely manner and also demonstrate wise use of financial aid allocations to ensure support to all students.

In addition to implementing specific policies aimed at timely degree progress, CSUN focused on the improvement of practices associated with educational achievement and student success. Some of these efforts were lauded in the WASC team CPR report, including improvements to advisement practices, technology in support of student progress, online tools such as the Degree Progress Report (DPR), My Academic Planner (MAP), "Roadmaps to the Degree," *Ask Matty* (FAQ) and The Early Warning System (TEWS). These initiatives exemplify good practice to support student success (CFR 2.12; 2.13).

Over the last several years, CSUN has studied, maintained and reinforced the practices that seem to be making the greatest impact on student learning and success. One of the areas that best demonstrates the use of data to inform and improve practice and the consideration of research-based practice, is CSUN's efforts in Advising Systems. For example, CSUN relied on

¹²As indicated in the EER report and on the CSUN web site (www.csun.edu/finaid/sap-policy11-12.htm)

¹³www.csun.edu/finaid/time-to-graduation.html

data and best practice information from the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) to expand advising systems including the greater utilization of DPRs and “Roadmaps to the Degree” in sessions with students, and a greater emphasis on more integrated ways of ensuring that new students complete remedial courses in the first year and directing new students to cohorted first-year experience programs. The technological elements for advising have also increased including department-based online advisement workshops and workshops designed specifically for transfer students. *Ask Matty* continues to be a resource for students, boasting nearly a half million hits since its launch in 2007. One source of evidence of the positive effect of advising programs is found in multi-year (2007 and 2009) National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) results, which show that upwards of 75% of first-year students and about 64% of seniors report “excellent or good” advising services and that fewer than 20% of seniors had “never” spoken to a faculty member or advisor about career plans. A longitudinal assessment of a cohort of students who entered in 2009 provides more in-depth information about the quality of advising. Results have been used to improve practice and assess impact. For example because results showed that students were not mastering the use of the DPR, advisers implemented changes in how the DPRs were introduced. Results the following year showed a positive impact of the change, but also suggested that additional improvements were needed. Further assessment of advising services will continue to refine practice (CFR 4.6).

Ongoing improvements to advising services seem to be important to CSUN. Data included in the EER report narrative about how resources are systematically evaluated implies that student satisfaction and use statistics are being reviewed along with research about effective advising to make further improvements. Attention to the evaluation of beneficial services such

as DPR and MAP is important to ensuring that reports remain user-friendly, and for TEWS, for having data to demonstrate the need to expand early alert.

Despite the significant improvements in advising at CSUN, it is clear that there is further room for improvement. The quality of advising was a concern expressed by students during the team visit. Students pointed to inconsistencies across colleges and departments that resulted in misinformation, and student feedback about the utility of *Ask Matty* was mixed. Advising staff indicated that innovations in My Academic Planner; the upcoming implementation of AdvisorTrac®; ongoing efforts to ensure that policies are enforced and that advisers are properly trained and that cross-divisional collaboration is encouraged; will help improve advising (CFR 4.6).

CSUN's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) is an important support to underrepresented students. Recent data evaluating the effectiveness of program components suggest that the Summer Bridge element has a significant impact on ensuring that less prepared students succeed at rates similar to their better-prepared peers.¹⁴ In addition, the one year continuation rate for EOP-Summer Bridge students has been slightly higher than the average persistence rate for all new students.¹⁵

Much of the emphasis on improving graduation rates and educational quality at CSUN has been appropriately focused on the first year experience. Again, efforts to improve quality in the first college year have been aided by data maintained by the university's Office of Institutional Research. Detailed reports such as the *One-Year Continuation Rates by Freshman Experience*, which includes rates broken down by athlete status, residential status, and by participation in programs such as Freshman Connection and Educational Opportunity Program,

¹⁴ "CSUN By the Numbers" (www.csun.edu/~instrsch/csunnumbersindex.html)

¹⁵ Ibid.

help point-out persistent problems, focus attention where it's most necessary, and assess program effectiveness.

Results indicate the need to continue to focus on addressing the remediation needs of entering students. Toward this end, the staff at CSUN indicated – during interviews - that efforts will be made to strengthen the “stretch composition” approach successfully employed at other CSU campuses to address developmental writing. Some promising results about the effectiveness of the Early Start program for developmental math or reading involving a linked Freshman Seminar class and a positive correlation with subsequent GE success and persistence suggest to CSUN that this model may be worth further investment. Similarly, a required Math 102 and Supplemental Instruction combination has been shown to improve student performance, but difficulties with courses with a high percent of D,F,U grades remain.¹⁶ The need to continue to address the challenges of remediation in mathematics is clear to CSUN, and the institution appears to be committed to exploring innovative approaches, including a Next Generation Learning grant that utilizes a hybrid lab emphasizing group work and individualized remediation. Staff affiliated with these programs reported widespread use of data about the effectiveness of these programs and of the reports provided by the Office of Institutional Research for monitoring and improving their efforts (CFR 2.13; 4.5; 4.6).

Additional first year experience programs have had an impact on persistence rates. University 100 (U100), the freshman seminar introduced in 1999, and the learning community Freshman Connection, which combines U100 with two other courses, have involved more students every year and show consistently higher persistence rates compared to students who are not enrolled in these programs. Organizing the elements of the first year experience with the

¹⁶ Appendix H, Table 4.

Director of Academic First Year Experiences has also been credited with helping faculty and students connect curricular and co-curricular learning (CFR 2.14).

Resources for transfer students were also identified as a noteworthy aspect of CSUN's graduation rate initiatives, and in particular that graduation rate data show underserved student populations achieving levels of success equivalent to those of better served populations. Campus conversations initiated in 2011 by the Provost and the Vice President for Student Affairs have provided additional opportunities to consider strategies for fostering transfer student success. Faculty and staff indicated a strong interest in continuing their efforts to make the advising process and entry into upper division GE more responsive to transfer students.

One of the key recommendations of the GRTF was for CSUN to make the university's General Education program consistent with those at other CSU campuses. Although a revision to the General Education curriculum has progressed, it is too early to gauge its impact on graduation rates. However, early data suggest that students graduating under the new GE requirements are graduating with appropriate levels of units, in contrast to past excesses in credits earned. More evidence of the intended effect on progress to degree and also on the overall quality of learning, is important to assessing the impact of GE revisions.

CSUN has also considered student success in post-baccalaureate programs. Based in its strong commitment to addressing the educational needs of the region, CSUN has expanded and enhanced programs for working adults in areas of regional need including, assistive technologies and therapies, engineering, and human services. The Masters of Public Administration (MPA) degree, and the Doctor of Education (EdD) degree, authorized in 2005, are two programs that are particularly responsive to local needs and are well-integrated and linked to agencies and school systems.

The assessment of student learning outcomes (SLOs) is a critical component of all educational effectiveness reviews. CSUN has created a separate, but integrated model for assessing student learning outcomes through curricular assessment within the academic structure of the University and via a parallel system of co-curricular assessment within Student Affairs (CFR 2.2; 2.3).

Institution-wide assessment of student learning is demonstrated in CSUN's use of two national surveys, the Freshman Survey and NSSE, and the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). Results from the Freshman Survey and NSSE have provided useful insights into the attitudes and values of incoming students and the extent to which students are engaged in effective educational practice. CLA results have had limited application due to small sample sizes and variation in student performance. CSUN's Fundamental Learning Competencies developed in 2008 provide a framework for assessment at the University-level, but don't yet seem to have been connected to direct measures of SLO assessment. CSUN's unique *Learning Habits Project*, launched in 2007 to track the progress of several student cohorts, has the potential to provide valuable insight into the characteristics and practices of the most effective students and educational experiences related to learning and success. Preliminary reports on the first year cohorts suggest the importance of student-faculty relationships to persistence, students stay at CSUN because of the campus relationships they form during their first year, especially with their instructors (CFR 2.5; 4.5; 4.6; 4.7).

CSUN's academic assessment website provides additional information about student learning outcomes at the university level, in terms of Fundamental Learning Competencies, and by department, and program, and for general education (CFR 2.3). The primary emphasis since 2005 has been to build a sustainable assessment infrastructure. One important element in the

structure is the appointment of assessment liaisons in all academic departments. The liaisons share best practices in assessment via monthly meetings and an annual assessment retreat. Another element of the assessment structure is the creation of a timetable for SLO assessment. Departments and programs provide yearly reports summarizing their assessment activities on a common template that is then aggregated to create a report on academic assessment across the University. Most departments and programs have now engaged in direct SLO assessment using direct embedded assessment or indirect assessment using surveys or other strategies, and others are appropriately learning that they must first revise their assessment instruments in order to obtain useful feedback. Most importantly, CSUN is beginning to see evidence that departments and programs are striving to “close the loop” with 19 of 67 programs indicating they made changes in curriculum based on assessment results (CFR 2.4; 4.4; 4.7; 4.8).

The results of the WASC review team’s examination of CSUN’s annual assessment reports and CSUN’s progress on ensuring that SLOs are identified in course syllabi and are being assessed in courses and programs demonstrate widespread attention to SLOs. In addition, faculty and staff were generally knowledgeable about assessment processes at CSUN and the value of SLOs for improved student learning, and they felt supported in their assessment work by the Academic Assessment Liaison Committee and the Office of Academic Assessment. However, CSUN is still developing its SLO work and, in particular, has not yet embedded SLOs in the standards that faculty use to evaluate student work, or fully integrated student learning assessment into program review (CFR 2.3; 2.4; 2.6; 4.4; 4.7).

As noted in the WASC team CPR report, the general assessment and in particular learning outcomes assessment in Student Affairs is laudable. The division’s thoughtful emphases on student learning, alignment with the University mission and President’s priorities, and increased

use of sophisticated approaches for studying educational effectiveness and student learning are now well-established. Revised in 2009, the division's 'Common Learning Themes' provide a framework for individual departments to assess impact on student learning. Basic information on the growth of data collection activities is evident in the tripling of assessment projects recorded on the Student Voice dashboard in a three- year period. Further evidence of the use of assessment to examine and improve student success initiatives are well-documented in the examples showcased in the EER, including the improvements to the interactive, web-based tool for exploring career plans based on student focus groups and survey feedback (CFR 2.11; 4.6).

3. Theme 2: Faculty and Staff Support for University Success

The second theme from CSUN's institutional proposal suggests that if the university provides adequate support for faculty and staff that support will translate into student success. As they appropriately note, evidence to support that sort of premise is largely anecdotal and qualitative. That said, CSUN thoroughly documented that support for both faculty and staff is quite comprehensive and appropriate to each group.

Support for faculty takes place in standard forms such as new faculty orientation, workshops, discussion forums, an extensive library collection, a growing set of online resources, and support from library staff in the development of new curricular proposals (CFR 2.8; 3.3; 3.4; 3.6). CSUN also has a sizable number of "smart" classrooms equipped with computers and networking capability. By the end of this year, over half of lecture rooms will have "thin" client technology, allowing for enhanced flexibility and cost savings. Plans call eventually for *all* classroom and lab space to be similarly-equipped (CFR 3.7). The university's new learning management system, Moodle, has been adopted by considerably more faculty than ever used its predecessor (Blackboard) although adoption is still far from universal (about 40% of all courses

and about 50% of all faculty). There is also a personal side to the new emphasis on academic technology. A faculty technology center provides staff to support faculty with their instructional technology needs. The faculty technology center also has offered instruction in both workshop and webcast formats and, comparing the two, a trend seems to be emerging. The average attendance at 154 workshops that have been held over the past two years has been about four per workshop. In contrast, the 36 webcasts that have been held during that time have averaged over 10 participants each. It would appear that the option of downloading a webcast may be working better for faculty members to access new information. Additional opportunities for faculty development are available through the Center for Innovative and Engaged Learning Opportunities.

Faculty can get funding for their teaching and research in a variety of ways. In academic year 2009/2010 CSUN invested \$3.5 million in faculty development for grants and research support. The Office of Community Engagement provides support for faculty involved in service learning (CFR 2.9). Funds are available in the form of grants to support professional development through the Judge Julian Beck Learning-Centered instructional project grants. The Provost's office also sponsors a professional development series.

A final way that faculty members are supported by the administration involves aggressively addressing enrollment increases through a major expansion of the faculty pool. CSUN indicates that for 2010/2011 they conducted 100 faculty searches and filled 99 positions. Half of the funding for the new positions came from the President's office; the other half came from the Provost's office (CFR 2.1; 3.1; 3.2).

While not as extensive as opportunities for faculty, CSUN has continued to provide development opportunities for its 1373 staff members even in a constrained resource

environment. A number of staff have participated in the leadership development series designed to build leadership on campus. Participants are engaged in collaborative problem solving and develop an understanding across divisions. Staff are also recognized with excellence awards.

Creating causal relationships between the support the university provides for its faculty and staff and student learning, is not easy. But CSUN argues that its ability to attract and retain faculty and staff is one measure of its success. On the staff side, there is positive evidence in the form of improved retention rates. In 2006, 68% of CSUN staff had more than five years of service and 43% had more than 10 years. By 2011, 73 percent of the staff had more than five years and 47% had more than 10 years. Whether this retention is due to other employment opportunities becoming more difficult or the positive atmosphere created at CSUN is difficult to determine. On the faculty side, the evidence is in the form of a faculty survey conducted in spring 2008 (admittedly before the prolonged recessionary period began).¹⁷ The survey found 2/3 of tenured and tenure track faculty were satisfied or very satisfied with overall job conditions. The same percentage thought there was adequate support for faculty development. Because the economy of the last several years combined with the continued budget cuts may have changed this picture somewhat, a new administration of the survey in the near future might be warranted.

IIB. Program Review

CSUN has a long history of conducting comprehensive reviews of academic programs, emphasizing departmental self-reflection and creative problem-solving with an overall goal of ensuring the highest quality educational programs. Programs have typically been examined along a variety of key dimensions including enrollment trends, completion rates, personnel,

¹⁷ CSUN participated in the faculty survey administered by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI).

student satisfaction, and advisement. Where appropriate, results of licensing examinations and placement, and evidence from external constituencies including employers, internship supervisors, professionals in the field and organizations are also included (CFR 2.7). Results from specialized program accreditation in the College of Arts, Media & Communication, College of Business & Economics, College of Education, College of Engineering & Computer Science, and College of Health & Human Development demonstrate CSUN's attention to quality assurance and educational effectiveness.

Based in part on the adoption of "good practices" in program review recommended by WASC¹⁸ program self-study guidelines have recently been revised to include the assessment of learning outcomes at both the course and program level (CFR 2.7; 4.4).¹⁹ The review process gives individual programs the flexibility to develop a wide variety of approaches to assessment. Examples of that flexibility include the use of portfolios in the Cinema & Television Arts program prepared after the junior year to reflect students' mastery of various emphases within the major, the use of signature assignments across courses in the major to evaluate student mastery of program learning outcomes (PLOs) in Communication Studies, and in Computer Engineering, the consideration of evaluations completed by the supervisors of students working in co-op settings. Appropriate specialized accreditation and disciplinary emphasis is also illustrated in, for example, Accounting in which the program reviews student performance on the Major Field Test in Business completed by a randomly selected sample of students enrolled in the College's capstone course. The use of the Education Benchmarking Inc. (EBI) Student Satisfaction Survey administered in the College's capstone course provides comparative information on levels of perceived preparation in key learning areas, and pass rate of CSUN

¹⁸ www.wascsenior.org/findit/files/forms/Program_Review_Resource_Guide_Sept_2009.pdf

¹⁹ blogs.csun.edu/ugs/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/self-study_guidelines_for_program_review1.doc

graduates on the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) examination yields comparative information on student learning in the major.

During the visit the team reviewed materials provided by and met with faculty and staff involved with the review process of four programs: the Master's program in psychology, the Bachelor's program in chemistry/biochemistry, the general education program, and co-curricular programs. A brief summary of each of these reviews follows.

1. Psychology (Master's level)

The most recent review of the program was completed in 2009. After reviewing the written report and interviewing the departmental representatives, the team agrees with the external reviewers' conclusion that the program is "one of the strongest programs at the university." It has many strengths that contribute to student learning and success including many small, hand-on courses, great financial support from extramural funding, a productive faculty, and a strong training program for underrepresented students are some of the strengths.

While the external review was very positive, it was based on guidelines that did not include learning outcomes assessment as key metric of program effectiveness and guide for decision-making. In the brief section on assessment, it was mentioned that SLOs were in the process of being developed. It also listed two surveys that were done – with poor response rates – but no results were discussed. In contrast, learning outcomes results were described in the most recent annual report.

During the interview with program representatives, a major restructuring of the program at the undergraduate and graduate levels was described. However assessment results were not cited as playing a role in the decision-making process behind the restructuring. The program

realizes that learning outcomes must be prioritized much more in the future, and is currently in the process of revising its assessment plan in that direction.

2. Chemistry/Biochemistry (Bachelor's level)

The most recent review of the program was completed in 2008-2009. This Program Review seems to reflect a transition stage between more traditional Program Reviews and those that are now encompassing Student Learning Outcomes. Much of the information contained is straightforward data reporting but the Chemistry Department was able to report its SLO's and indicate which SLO's were measured in each of the three previous years. Information was collected and it appears that changes were implemented in at least some areas as a result of findings. Some responses to the reviewers' recommendations indicate progress or changes that have been made while others indicate resource constraints or suggest ongoing attention is already being paid to the area.

The basics are in place. Standards are established, assessments are done at regular intervals, and data are being collected and analyzed. Multiple measures are in use to assess student learning (although the precise details of the measures was not clear) and the Department is aware of how those efforts could be improved. Time constraints and workload currently affect the department's ability to more effectively utilize the Program Review process.

As the annual assessments become more effectively integrated into the culture of the organization the team anticipates the Program Reviews will reflect a more mature understanding of the learning that has occurred in the previous five years and the plans for the upcoming years. This expectation was confirmed in interviews with Department leadership.

3. General Education

CSUN's efforts to conduct a program review of the General Education program are in the early stages. The phasing in of general education assessment and program review corresponds with CSUN's process of revisioning general education, as detailed in their EER case study. At the time of the EER visit, a council had been formed and historical data had been collected. The campus recognized that they had no structure within faculty governance to address GE issues and have created a separate standing committee of the Faculty Senate. Recertification of GE courses is under way. The GE Council established clear procedures that require student learning outcomes and assessment plans in all GE courses undergoing certification. Specifically, SLO statements are required in course syllabi and recertification forms require explanations of how evidence of student learning will be assessed and used to improve the course. CSUN has devised a five-year plan for recertification with a heavy emphasis on student learning outcomes. This emphasis will set the stage for attending to student learning outcomes in general education program review.

The on-site visit team's review of a binder containing documents associated with the general education program review and discussions with assessment staff, faculty administrators and members of the general education committee, confirmed that GE program review is at an early stage. Documentation of recertified courses illustrates an attention to assessment and student learning outcomes. In addition, administrators and faculty acknowledged the importance of general education to student success and indicated support for efforts to recertify courses and ensure that the curriculum supported student learning and success. CSUN has also committed to sending staff to the WASC General Education Assessment conference to work further on their assessment plans. Furthermore, the provost and deans have assumed responsibility for managing

the budgetary implications of the GE program encouraging the faculty to focus on student learning. Committee members believe that the culture on campus will support their work in this program review.

4. Co-Curricular Programs (Student Affairs)

CSUN's expansion of program review to include non-degree programs provided an opportunity for student affairs to extend their assessment efforts and connect their work into the institution's cyclical process for evaluating and continuously improving the quality of programs. WASC's emphasis on the importance of assessing co-curricular programs provided further impetus for the division of student affairs to fully participate in program review (CFR 2.11).

The student affairs division has fully embraced the value of program review for enhancing educational effectiveness. Staff has a firm grasp on the purpose, process, and outcomes of the review and division leadership has invested in providing staff the support they need to conduct the review and have dedicated funds to support peer review. The level of support by senior leadership is high, and it is noteworthy that the division has agreed to fund each unit's peer review process.

Student affairs adopted a five-year program review schedule that puts up three programs for review each year. A well-organized plan has been created to allow programs to coordinate their review with specialized accreditation initiatives. About half of the programs in student affairs will use specialized accreditation for their reviews; the others will conduct self-studies using the Council for the Standards for Higher Education (CAS) criteria against which to evaluate the quality of programs. The division has developed a thorough program review training module and a step-by-step guide to help units complete the self-study components. They have also done an effective job of laying the groundwork for connecting their defined

student learning outcomes to the CAS framework and to the units' strategic priorities. Staff across several units demonstrated their progress in integrating the review process into their assessment activities and strategic initiatives.

Although student affairs is in the early stages of program review, their work demonstrates exceptional preparation for the task at hand, enthusiasm about the process and what they will learn from the review, and demonstrated capacity for making use of lessons learned in the process. The Klotz Student Health Center provides a model for extensive use of evidence and lessons learned in their specialized accreditation, and other units are well on their way to developing useful self-study reports. The integration of the division's quality student learning outcomes assessment work into program review will provide student affairs greater opportunity to aggregate annual assessment activities into a more meaningful whole and connect it to strategic priorities. Moreover, the inclusion of student affairs in program review provides an important opportunity for the division to more fully express and demonstrate its commitment to assessment and quality improvement.

Summary

The first two programs discussed above had completed their reviews in the past few years while the latter two are still in the planning stage. The difference between the two groups is indicative of the recent shift in focus in the direction of learning outcomes assessment.

Outcomes data were not discussed in the psychology review (although it was mentioned in their most recent annual report) while for chemistry/biochemistry, an analysis of learning outcomes results was limited to the chemistry major. On the other hand, the assessment of learning outcomes is central to the plans for the program reviews in both general education and co-curricular programs.

Subsequent to the meetings with program review representatives the team was provided with a copy of the program review report for the department of kinesiology. A strength of that report is that, consistent with the new guidelines, the connectedness of student learning throughout the program is described. A matrix shows the sequence of courses in the major, which courses apply to the various learning outcomes, and the depth of learning that will occur in each instance (introductory, in-depth, integration, or application). The team encourages all academic programs coming up for review to not only adopt this practice but also to “close the loop” by describing what changes are made to courses and course sequences as a result of learning outcomes assessment.

IIC. Other Issues Arising from the Standards and CFRs

1. Revised CFRs

As part of the reaccreditation process, each institution undergoing review is expected to review their status with regard to the new requirements established as a result of the 2008 revision WASC’s Criteria for Review (CFRs). CSUN provided an audit of their compliance in Appendix H of their CPR report, thoroughly documenting how the new requirements were met. Although they did not provide a follow-up to that audit with their EER report, the team feels that based on the EER report itself, interviews with CSUN administrators, and information available on CSUN’s institutional research web site, that they fully comply with all of the new requirements.

2. CFRs relevant to the EER that were not addressed.

Overall the institution did a commendable job of addressing WASC’s 42 Criteria for Review. The one EER-relevant exception we could find was CFR 2.1, which deals with the

appropriateness of the content of its degree programs for the degrees awarded and also the sufficiency of qualified faculty for those programs.

3. Response to the Economic Downturn

For many public institutions in the United States the economic downturn has had significant negative effects. CSUN reports that it anticipated fiscal challenges beginning approximately 2005. While obviously not predicting the housing crash, the university did accurately predict that revenues from government sources would likely continue declining for the foreseeable future. As a result, the CSUN administration began creating the sorts of efficiencies necessary to weather a downturn (CFR 3.5). During the past two budget years while state funds have declined CSUN had sufficient reserves to smooth the transition. Leadership in the organization understood that money could not be spent in areas that did not produce the central outcomes and it began finding efficiencies and reallocating money. The result is an extremely fiscally conservative organization that invests richly in critical functions. While painful cuts have certainly been made over the years, none has been headline grabbing and individuals within the organization clearly recognize that the tradeoffs accrue to the collective benefit of student success; cuts in some areas directly result in investments in high priority areas. Not only has CSUN weathered the downturn the university has been in the enviable position of investing in faculty and staff development, adding additional class sections strategically, and avoiding impacting, while other public institutions are cutting.

4. Sustainability

WASC is appropriately interested in the sustainability of efforts undertaken over the past three years. The team consistently noted that the processes, learning, and focus found at CSUN had little to do with the WASC review itself. The efforts undertaken were described as simply

the way CSUN does business. The team believes the foundation at CSUN could not be stronger. The components are in place and the organization is on a path that will lead it in the coming years to achieving the outcomes it sets for student learning and success.

The CPR review acknowledged the central role the current President and Provost have played in shaping the culture, sustaining clear priorities and helping the organization become what it is today. Conversations with campus members indicate they understand that this positions them well for the transition from a retiring President to her successor. Appropriate plans are in place, the infrastructure for sophisticated assessment exists, funding is being prudently managed and the people at CSUN genuinely love what they do and take pride in the successes of their students.

5. Marketing of academic programs

It is the team's opinion that CSUN presents an accurate portrait of its academic program to potential students and other audiences. In conversations with students during the visit, none said that they were disappointed with CSUN, and several, including a few who were in the Equal Opportunity Program, said their experience was better than they thought was possible (CFR 1.7).

SECTION III. Findings and Recommendations from the Capacity and Preparatory Review and the Educational Effectiveness Review

IIIA. Commendations

The campus is to be commended for the following educational effectiveness outcomes:

1. Improving first year retention and graduation rates, reducing the graduation rate gap, and deepening the university's understanding of the factors that influence student success.

2. Having many faculty who, for the benefit of students, now base changes in their courses on the results of learning outcomes assessment.
3. Continuing to define the cutting edge of learning outcomes assessment in the curriculum and in the co-curriculum.

Undergirding these outcomes, CSUN is also to be commended for:

4. Being the visionary pragmatists the university claims to be.
5. Creating an enviable campus climate where collaborative problem-solving is the norm.
6. Engaging in strategic fiscal management that has made it possible to weather uncertain financial times and even pursue innovative programs designed to enhance educational effectiveness.
7. Investing in faculty and staff in ways that CSUN believes will contribute to student learning and success.
8. Empowering people to take risks to seek solutions to important problems.

IIIB. Recommendations

The WASC visiting team offers the following recommendations:

1. While advising has improved, there is still a need to reduce inconsistency in the quality of advising in the major.
2. Now that policies are in place to improve time to degree, the team encourages CSUN to monitor the effectiveness of those policies and work on factors that will lead to further improvement.
3. While learning outcomes assessment is more widespread than ever at CSUN, there are still faculty and even entire programs that have not yet adopted that practice. The

team encourages efforts towards more widespread adoption of learning outcomes assessment.

4. To a large extent, program review at CSUN is still evolving. The team encourages that further development focus on giving learning outcomes assessment a major role in the program review process. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure meaningful integration of student learning outcomes assessment at the course and program-level, and the institution's Fundamental Learning Outcomes.
5. Continue to partner with LAUSD to improve the preparedness of CSUN students.

APPENDIX. Credit Hour Policies and Procedures

Institution: CSUN
 Kind of Visit: EER
 Date: 9/14/2011

A completed copy of this form should be appended to the team report for all CPR, EER and Initial Accreditation Visits. Teams are not required to include a narrative about this matter in the team report but may include recommendations, as appropriate, in the Findings and Recommendations section of the team report.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)	Verified Yes/No
Policy on credit hour	Does this policy adhere to WASC policy and federal regulations?	YES
	Comments: CSUN policy on the credit hour/award of academic credit follows standard Cal State University policy as described in the Academic Planning Data Base Reference Manual http://www.csun.edu/epc/documents/Course%20Classification.pdf	
Process(es)/ periodic review	Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)?	YES
	Does the institution adhere to this procedure?	YES
	Comments: CSUN’s new course approval process requires proposals be submitted through the course’s department and College’s Academic Council and reviewed by the Educational Policies Committee (a standing committee of the Faculty Senate). Submissions use either a New Course Proposal Form or, for new courses with lecture/lab or lecture/activity co-requisites, a New Course: Lecture/Lab or Lecture/Activity Combination Form. Forms were confirmed to be available at: http://www.csun.edu/epc/curriculumforms.html Forms require information about C-class designation and this is reviewed during the standard course approval process. With regard to adherence: CSUN provided examples of several completed new course forms and confirmation of final approved courses with lab and clinical activities to demonstrate that the institution adheres to this procedure. A new Computer Science course, for example, with a lecture and lab, was classified at 3 lecture units, plus a 1 unit lab, and a final EPC approved version of a Health & Human Development course with clinical work correctly classified.	
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours?	YES

	Comments: CSUN's Class Scheduling Guide shows that on-ground courses follow standard class meeting hours and standard class length. A review of courses available on the on http://www.csun.edu/openclasses list indicate that course listings follow the standard meeting hours.	
Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? Completely online and hybrid are offered. How many syllabi were reviewed? 5 What degree level(s)? undergraduate only What discipline(s)? Art, Geology, English, Philosophy, Physics	YES
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded?	YES
	Comments: Faculty Senate approved definitions of online and hybrid courses as well as related policy, were reviewed and confirmed to include information about work for credit hour awarded http://www.csun.edu/senate/policies/onlinehybridcourses022411.pdf (approved on Feb 4, 2011) Furthermore, the Academic Technology Committee Annual Report provided the following updates on online and hybrid policies: On September 10, 2011 a revised Online and Hybrid Policy was unanimously passed by ATC members; On February 4, 2011 a revised Online and Hybrid Policy was unanimously passed by the Senate Executive Committee; On April 14, 2011 the Online and Hybrid Policy was passed at the Faculty Senate Meeting; On May 6, 2011 the Online and Hybrid Policy was approved. (This new policy creates uniform online and hybrid course definitions and designations to better inform students about the course format and the technology and the skills needed before the student registers for the course). http://www.csun.edu/atc/ATC_annual_report2010-2011.pdf Syllabi reflect specific instructions about use of Moodle, and other on line environments and software packages to conduct exercises and experiments, to complete course assigned time.	
Sample syllabi or equivalent for other kinds of courses that do not meet for the prescribed hours (e.g., internships, labs, clinical, independent study, accelerated)	What kinds of courses? Variety of courses with lab, internship, fieldwork components. How many syllabi were reviewed? 6 What degree level(s)? all undergraduate level courses What discipline(s)? Art, Biology, Computer Science, Social Work, Education, University 100.	YES
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded?	YES
	Comments: Several syllabi for courses involving studios, labs, independent study, or other non-standard meeting hours were reviewed to determine if materials showed that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant credit awarded.	

	<p>Two laboratory course proposals in Computer Science were reviewed and determined to require the appropriate number of hours and work for credit awarded. University 100 syllabi was reviewed and determined to require meeting hours and work appropriate for 3 credit hours. ART 114 World Arts, PSY 150 Principles of Human Behavior, and SOC 306 Jewish and Communal Family Structure were spot checked for course requirements and work appropriate for credit awarded.</p> <p>Studio work. ART 327– Painting II: Representational Imagery (3 credit hours) syllabus includes statement about expectations for time spent in and out of studio: “please keep in mind that with any 3-credit hour studio/lab class, in addition to time spent in class, at least 3 hours of work outside scheduled class time is considered part of the course load. (The painting room has open lab hours which will be announced.)” reviewed for statements clarifying expectations for workload to students.</p> <p>A sample of requirements for field work in courses offered in the College of Education were reviewed for hours required and deemed appropriate.</p> <p>CSUN provided evidence of an Academic Internship Policy Statement (revised and approved by EPC April 20, 2011) clarifying that internships that allow students to earn academic credit must meet Carnegie and faculty workload standards (http://www.csun.edu/epc/documents/Course%20Classification.pdf) related to required hours and additional pedagogical and risk management standards required by the California State University and Cal State Northridge. Each College is responsible for maintaining data that will ensure compliance with current academic standards and risk management policies (http://blogs.csun.edu/ugs/).</p>	
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