

California State University, Stanislaus
Support Unit Review
Executive Summary

Office of Faculty Affairs

September 17, 2008

Self-Study & External Review

1) *Annual Reports and self-study*

a) *Evaluation process*

The external Review Team employed a client survey form, as well as extensive interviews with various colleagues and clients. The unit itself did an internal scan based on the SUR guidelines and questions provided. One outcome revealed by this process is the need to develop and implement a permanent annual “customer satisfaction” survey instrument.

b) *Divergence between self-study and review team findings*

There was actually very little divergence between these two perspectives. The need for additional staffing was established in both, with only a modest difference of opinion as to the proposed functions of those additions. The suggestion by the External Team to create a recruitment and hiring manual for temporary faculty was an excellent recommendation, and welcomed by the unit. The unit was also gratified to see its organizational placement ratified by the External Team. The greatest point of divergence was on the issue of new Lecturer orientations: the unit thinks it a laudable notion, but remains skeptical as to the pragmatic challenges inherent in a successful implementation.

2) *Mid-year and annual budget reports*

a) *Narrative summary*

The budget allocation provided by the Provost is an historical artifact, and thus reflects various “baseline” assumptions that remain unchanged from year to year. Like any university budget, it is dominated by personnel costs—which remain predictable, and change only in relation to overall university adjustments (e.g., General Salary Increases and the like). There is very little “discretionary” funding to be found, so there is very little opportunity to exercise management discretion. Mid-year reports are used to simply monitor expenditures with an eye toward a balanced budget at year’s end.

b) *Assessment of resource allocation and effectiveness*

The Faculty Development Center remains under the organizational and managerial umbrella of the unit. The “baseline” allocation for the Center supports basic operations. Faculty training, understood in its broadest sense, should be a major component of either the Office of Faculty Affairs or the Faculty Development Center (or sponsored jointly). The challenge

for the unit, fiscally speaking, is to address major developmental needs (e.g., the training of new department chairs and deans) in an effective and periodic way. A small amount of Lottery funding has been allocated to the Center in the past (for its “Mini-grant” program to improve instruction).

- c) *Adequacy of resources allocated to perform mandated functions*

Both the self-study and the report of the External Review Team recognize that the unit is understaffed. However, in the midst of a state budget crisis, there are no “easy” answers. Long-term, as the campus grows, this need must be addressed. The unit has also inherited functions and expectations that—while no longer truly mandatory—remain obligations (at least in the minds of our clients).
- 3) *Effectiveness of the unit in supporting the mission of the university*
- a) *Mission, goals, and values*

Faculty are at the very center of the teaching/learning enterprise, and this unit’s mission statement clearly addresses the role we expect to play: “. . . to serve and support the professional needs of our university’s faculty from recruitment to retirement.” Further, as the External Review Team points out, “Faculty personnel matters and faculty development substantively affect and are inseparable from decisions about curriculum and the educational programs of the university.” Because the faculty work under a collective bargaining agreement, the unit must also take on the additional task of providing an effective labor/management environment—a context which respects the role of the faculty union, and balances the conventional goals of the university with the mandate to recruit and retain quality faculty—and attending to the “employee relations” issues which will (we hope) maintain their effectiveness. The principal value which guides the unit is *service*. We believe that keeping this core value constantly at the forefront of our operations will shape all of our daily transactions, and help us achieve the level of support expected/demanded of a “support unit.” This orientation has immediate and practical applications: we do not demand that faculty make advanced appointments to see us; we do not pass the buck; we do not turn faculty into “ping-pong balls” bounced from administrative unit to administrative unit; we pride ourselves in problem-solving; we know that the faculty are not always right—but they are always our *raison d’etre*. Finally, we believe this stance mirrors the larger University’s commitment to, and attitude toward, students and their total educational experience.
 - b) *Processes and assessment*

Given the constant pressure under which the unit operates in order to address the “ordinary” demands and expectations placed on us, long-term planning is a challenge. Short term, our planning tends to be *ad hoc* implementation responses (e.g., in anticipation of newly-negotiated labor agreements) or routine planning of annual events (e.g., the Faculty

Recognition Dinner). As for assessment, this SUR process has clearly demonstrated to us the necessity of putting into place a periodic survey instrument to both measure our effectiveness and invite suggestions for improvement. Although we have done both of those things in an informal and unsystematic way, we recognize the wisdom of capturing a wider audience response—and doing so more frequently. As will be seen in our Strategic Implementation Plan, we intend (with the assistance of Institutional Research) to develop such an instrument, and to deploy it as soon as practical.

c) *Special Issue: the support of student learning*

In the dyadic discourse that is learning, the teacher is of course an essential element. Thus, while our unit rarely interacts directly with students (other than those who are members of Unit 11), we feel we play a significant role as we support the people providing instruction. To the extent that we can render the practical and mundane dimensions of their employment largely transparent, we enable greater focus on their primary functions of teaching, scholarship, and service. To the extent that we can facilitate and enhance their well-being as employees, they remain effective and undistracted. To the extent that we are able to resolve conflicts and maintain mutual respect, healthy labor/management relations ought to encourage productivity, high morale, and institutional loyalty.