Goal 10. White Paper – Creating the institutional processes necessary to accurately assess our progress.

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Overview

The university has been moving ahead in the challenging process of changing institutional processes and culture to support continuous examination of goals, self-reflection, and self-examination as a way of working and improving the university for the benefit of students.   In order to address the issue of student learning assessment, several institutional processes require review and redesign in order to directly support the goal of becoming learning centered as outlined in the institution's most recent accreditation self-study.

Among the institutional processes needed:

1) **institutional strategic planning in a manner that ensures open participation, with a routine and predictable cycle, standing committees, and representative membership**

2) **establish formal mechanisms to ensure plans are implemented**

3) **link budgets to plans and priorities, and establish a multi-year horizon for budgeting and planning,**

4) **structure academic program and support unit reviews to ensure recommendations inform planning and budgeting,**

5) **establish assessment of student learning as a core knowledge base which informs decision-making and institutional priorities.**

With the implementation of these elements, an institutionalized cycle of accountability is established: an open and participatory planning process, with follow-up operational plans to implement the goals, and evaluation of progress toward current goals. The Plan-Act-Evaluate model is clearly and firmly established at the university as a result of leadership of the President and the Provost's Deans Council over the past two academic years.   These accomplishments are outlined in this paper along with suggested steps to continue the implementation process. (see Briefing Paper approved February 5, 2000,   *** url will go here***)

1) Institutionalize Strategic Planning

At the August 2001 President's Cabinet Retreat, decisions were made to adopt a model based on recommendations from the Offices of Business Affairs, Institutional Research, Planning, and Accountability, and an interim budget committee chaired by Dr. Tom Young, to formally link and institutionalize strategic planning, assessment/program evaluation, with budgeting and operational planning.   This decision was the result of a great deal of work and discussion among the Provost's Deans Council members.

In Academic Affairs, the college deans and graduate school have taken a leadership role in setting academic priorities and planning in the colleges. The College of Arts, Letters, and Sciences has extensive planning groups and processes for program review and strategic planning to advise the Dean. In Business and Education, accreditation requirements have ensured assessment mandates that will also meet WASC requirements are in place and actively inform curriculum reform.

Among the Vice Presidents, Business and Finance has shown strong leadership in establishing continuing quality improvement efforts, Balanced Scorecard and process mapping. The Vice President for Development and University Relations has a very strong planning and administrative accountability process. Student Affairs, likewise, has taken a leadership role in implementing the university's Support Unit Review process.

As a result, the campus is well on the way to accomplishing this goal. Tremendous progress has been made over the past academic year through the formation of the standing strategic planning committees.

> *Suggested Implementation Steps to Institutionalize Budget, Planning and Review Processes.*
>> *Ensure that the planning process respects existing administrative and academic structures. In particular, the valuable insights and feedback of academic department chairs and administrative directors in the support units must be included in the planning and budgeting process.*
>> *Define the manner in which college plans and plans in the VP support units will be linked to the overall steering committee plans and the Goals and Priorities Committee.*
>> *Develop consensus on how existing plans and evaluation processes are included in the planning and budgeting process to ensure that bottom-up feedback from the recommendations of the program review processes –the foundation and bread and butter of the institution -- informs strategic priorities as fairly as exciting new initiatives.*
>> *Identify the manner in which specialized Strategic Plans are incorporated into the overall University Plans (such as Library, Student Services, Development, Technology, Master Facilities Planning, etc.)*

2) Establish Formal Mechanisms to Ensure Implementation of Plans

A commonly cited concern at the university has been the tendency to establish plans and to initiate new programs without steady handed, multi-year follow through. Therefore, attention should be focused in the future on establishing formal linkages between strategic planning, setting operational goals, and allocating resources to accomplish institutional priorities in a manner that ensures quality academic and administrative support programs.

> *Suggested Implementation Steps to ensure Implementation of Plans:*
>> *Request that the college deans periodically report progress toward meeting WASC/CO accountability requirements and recommendations from program reviews are operationalized, implemented, and progress toward fulfilling the recommendations are tracked and acted upon where appropriate.*

The Committee on Strategic Measurements and Performance Assessment should compile an annual report synthesizing college and support unit progress in implementation of recommendations of their program review and QI efforts.

3) Link Budgets to Plans & Establish Multi-Year Budgeting Horizon

Given the current budget crisis, this goal is not only more difficult to implement, but also more crucial to implement. Because the university's leadership is visionary and will continue to strive to offer new programs to meet the needs of the students and its community, it is critical to ensure that new programs maintain quality and are properly funded.

The mechanisms for multi-year budgeting have not yet been established, but it is anticipated that this issue will be addressed by the Budget Advisory Committee during this year.

Suggested Implementation Steps to Link Budgets to Plans:

For New Programs. Develop a formal Feasibility and Sustainability assessment process prior to approval of new academic or support programs which includes: multi-year projections of direct and indirect costs, the impact on units which will be required to support it (library, technology, facilities, student and business services), revenue and sources of revenue.

For Existing Programs. Develop a uniform format for submitting budget requests of existing departments and units to include anticipated needs and projections two or three years in the future in addition to the current operational year. This should include the use of carry-over funds, planning for large purchases, etc.

4) Academic Program & Support Unit Review, Balanced Scorecard, Continuous Process Improvement throughout the University

The Senate has approved a pilot academic program review process geared toward incorporating planning processes of the academic departments into the college plans. This process will be evaluated and further refined by the Senate Executive Committee in the upcoming academic year.

A support unit review process was adopted by the president in March 2001. To date, Student Affairs and Business and Finance have been active in reviewing their programs, developing Balanced Scorecards, and process mapping. The Vice President for Development has been active in strategic planning and outcomes planning. However, units reporting to Academic Affairs have not participated in the process to date.

Suggested Implementation Steps for Ensuring Internal Educational Quality for Support Programs & Infrastructure:

Academic Affairs units need to be included in the program review to serve as a model for the rest of the university. In this way, allocation of resources to these critical programs can be more clearly understood and documented.

Allocation of resources for support units in Academic Affairs and in other VP areas does not appear to have been institutionalized in the

*enrollment driven funding formula. The university should develop
equitable mechanisms to include the needs of support programs in the
budgeting process.*
*The university's leadership should be actively involved in implementing
recommendations generated from the new support program review
process.*

5) ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

CSU Stanislaus has been active in addressing assessment issues since the early 1990s. These
efforts have increased over the past five years. The last formal Academic Assessment Plan was
approved by the Academic Senate in May of 1997.   The document recommended responsibility
for oversight of institutional planning and assessment to a university-wide committee and that
the Office of Institutional Research serve as the administrative office responsible for the design,
coordination, implementation and dissemination of the university's assessment efforts. This
past fall, Provost Dauwalder convened a broad based group to further define assessment
responsibilities and roles.

Despite efforts to move forward, it is not clear whether the university can respond appropriately
to the Chancellor's Office Accountability Report due in 2004 which requires that the university
demonstrate its use of assessment data to improve the quality of academic programs.

> *Suggested Implementation Steps:*
> *Request that faculty governance provide an evaluation of progress to
> date on achieving the university-wide goals of their 1997 plan.*
> *At the same time, review with the academic department chairs through
> the Deans, the academic departments' progress in identifying student
> learning goals, assessing the degree to which students are acquiring the
> knowledge and skills identified by the faculty, and the extent to which
> information from assessments are used to inform academic and
> curricular decisions.*
> *The General Education component should be assessed with the aim of
> enhancing student learning and development throughout the
> undergraduate career. An evaluation of the degree to which this is
> being accomplished and the status of GE in developing observable
> learning goals and status on implementing assessment of GE learning
> goals seems to be in order.*
> *The issue of how the Honors program courses should be integrated and
> supported to a greater degree throughout the campus should be
> addressed.*
> *Evaluate and revise as needed the pilot academic degree program
> review process in fall 2003.*

Assessment Methods for Graduate Studies were approved by the Graduate Council and revised
in 1998 in preparation for the university's regional reaffirmation of accreditation by WASC.
And in August of 2000, learning goals for graduate studies were approved. The plan for
graduate programs was comprehensive and included assessments and multiple measures of
student quality and learning, faculty quality, and program quality.

Suggested Implementation Steps for Graduate Programs:
Request from the Graduate Council an update on its progress toward accomplishing goals set out in the 1997 document as well as plans to assess the success in meeting learning objectives as set out in the August 2000 goal statement.

Suggested Implementation Steps for Accreditation Standards:
Request Associate Provost/Provost's Deans Council members prepare a status report on:

(1) institutional progress toward fulfilling the three major WASC recommendations as well as preparedness to meet professional accreditation standards in the colleges of ALS, Education, and Business.

(2) adjustments that may be needed to align the program review processes to meet the multiple demands it is now responsive to: WASC, the Chancellor's Office Accountability Reporting requirements, professional accreditation requirements, and most importantly, institutional need for understanding student needs and learning.

Suggested Implementation Steps for Student Development:
Goals for student development do not appear to have been as fully integrated in academic discussions of student learning outcomes. The Vice President for Student Affairs undertook a vigorous assessment of its programs in 2002. Sensitivity to the needs in this area of student learning should be fostered throughout the campus community by means that would best be determined by the Vice President for Student Affairs.