

Celebrating Excellence

ANNOUNCING
THE
TEN-YEAR
REAFFIRMATION
OF
ACCREDITATION
1998-2008

BY
THE WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES



Marvalene Hughes, Ph.D.
President

MISSION
STATEMENT

California State University, Stanislaus

The faculty, staff, administrators, and students of California State University, Stanislaus are committed to creating a learning environment that encourages all members of the campus community to expand their intellectual, creative, and social horizons. We challenge one another to realize our potential, to appreciate and contribute to the enrichment of our diverse community, and to develop a passion for life-long learning.

To facilitate this mission, we promote academic excellence in the teaching and scholarly activities of our faculty, encourage personalized student learning, foster interactions and partnerships with our surrounding communities, and provide opportunities for the intellectual, cultural, and artistic enrichment of the region.



April 2, 1999

THE
PRESIDENT'S
DESK
LETTER

Marvalene Hughes, Ph.D.
President

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

A university's reaccreditation is one of the most important indicators of institutional quality. The highest evaluation proffered by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is a ten-year reaffirmation that includes a five-year review. It is with great pride and a deep sense of gratitude for the dedicated work of our faculty, staff, students and the external community that I announce the decision by the WASC to award California State University, Stanislaus the highest possible rating. On February 24, 1999, the Accrediting Commission for the Senior Colleges and Universities of WASC affirmed our reaccreditation, effective to the year 2008.

This reaccreditation also affirms the effectiveness of our 3-year process of institutional self-study and acknowledges the thorough evaluation provided by the WASC visiting team of professionals led by Dean Hubbard, President of Northwest Missouri State University. President Hubbard's distinguished national reputation for his knowledge of learning organizations and institutional quality helped the campus understand more deeply the ways in which each of us may enhance the quality of education for our students.

I wish to convey great appreciation to the many individuals who contributed to this accomplishment. Provost Richard Curry challenged the campus to be creative and bold in developing a thematic approach to the University's self-study and vigorously supported the accreditation process. Special recognition is extended to Dr. Diana Mayer Demetrulias, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Graduate Studies, who serves as our accreditation liaison officer and who provided excellent leadership for this effort. Deep appreciation is extended also to Dr. Stephen Stryker of the Department of English who served expertly as Faculty Coordinator for the self-study, and to Dean Mary Cullinan for major contributions to the self-study document. We are also grateful to all the members of the accreditation steering committee—Dr. Rita Asher, Dr. Carl Bengston, Dr. Harriet Blodgett, Dr. Mary Cullinan, Dr. Pi-Sheng Deng, Dr. Kenneth Entin, Ms. Jessie Garza-Roderick, Dr. April Hejka-Ekins, Dr. Fred Hilpert, Jr., Dr. David Keymer, Dr. James Klein, Ms. Maithreyi Manoharan, Dr. Pamela Roe, Mr. Larry Starkey, Ms. Mary Stephens, Dr. Walter Strong, and Mr. Thomas Tompkins. I especially acknowledge Dr. Harriet Blodgett for her excellent editing skills.

In addition, outstanding staff support was provided by Ms. Jeanne Elliott, Ms. Frances Davenport, Ms. Callale Cierra, Ms. Jamie DeBruin, Ms. Shirley Butler, Ms. Connie Bratten, and Ms. Vicki Eden. The academic deans, department chairs, and campus leaders (faculty, staff, and administration) also contributed their expert knowledge to this effort and are to be congratulated. With great respect, I thank the leaders of the Associated Students, Inc.,

and the students who participated in the various stages of the reaccreditation process. Finally, members of our external community, including but not limited to our Foundation Board of Trustees and our Advisory Board, gave generously of their time to meet with the team, thereby enriching the content of this report.

As you know, our campus conducted a non-traditional self-study—one that combined the framework of the traditional accreditation standards with a focused, critical inquiry into CSU Stanislaus as a learning-centered university. Working closely with WASC Director Ralph Wolff and Associate Director Judie Wexler, we wrote an analytical self-evaluation and a valuable document designed to help us build on our strategic plan. Our goal was to establish a cycle of planning, action, analyses, and change with a central focus on student learning and institutional improvement.

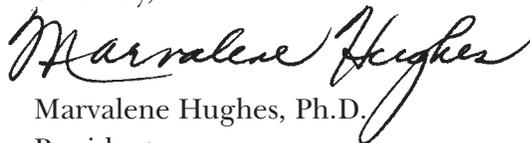
This approach to our institutional self-study was highly successful and is receiving praise throughout the state. Complementing our invigorated strategic and academic planning processes, the analytic self-study has helped us to define more clearly our mission, the nature of teaching and learning at CSU Stanislaus, and the ways in which our campus decisions reflect the emphasis on the quality of student learning.

The following is an executive summary of the major recommendations by the WASC Commission and the salient observations by the visiting team. The full text of these reports is available on the University's WEB page (see "About CSU Stanislaus: WASC: WASC Report to Campus: 1999").

Again, I express my appreciation to the campus community and the University's friends in the region for contributing over the last four decades to building such an excellent and dynamic institution of higher learning for our Central Valley of California. I am deeply honored to be a member of this vibrant and visionary community of learners.

I invite the campus to read the entire 27-page report on the University web site.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marvalene Hughes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, decorative flourish at the end of the name.

Marvalene Hughes, Ph.D.
President

WASC EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WASC STANDARDS

The WASC Commission commended the University for “...the use of the self- study as an opportunity to define and explore its status in regard to being learning-centered and for its willingness to commit to an explicit central core value.” It applauded the University for going beyond the accreditation standards by examining analytically and comprehensively its core values.

Similarly, the visiting team’s overall assessment of the campus is highly complimentary. Commendations throughout the team’s report illustrate the superlative efforts—and achievements—of our faculty, students, staff, and administration.

A LEARNING-CENTERED UNIVERSITY

The Commission and visiting team were highly complimentary of the faculty and their dedication and close relationship to students. The visitors described a campus climate characterized by respect for a diverse student population and one in which students report that faculty care deeply about their learning and their academic and social success.

Overall, the Commission applauded the University for acknowledging the complexity of our inquiry and the enormous vigilance required to ensure that CSU Stanislaus continues its quest in meaningful ways—going beyond rhetoric or superficial applications.

They recommended that we engage the entire campus community in defining “learning-centered,” that we actively promote a culture of learning and a culture of evidence for demonstrating student learning, and that we align faculty and staff development activities around this campus value.

The visiting team’s report highlighted the learning-centered philosophy at the University and recommended that we organize our implementation strategies under four rubrics: defining learning-centered, priority setting, budget development, and assessment of educational quality.

Learning-centered

Clearly, the greatest challenge and most intellectually stimulating element of our institutional self-study was identifying, evaluating, and defining the ways in which our campus was or was not learning-centered. With a philosophical stance that maintains a staunch commitment to the quality of teaching as inextricably connected to the quality of learning, our campus rejected a limited student-centered (student as customer) definition.

Similarly, the team indicated the need to integrate co-curricular programs into the curriculum and faculty activities. The team praised the student affairs leadership for the enhanced communication and coordination of student programs over the past few years.

They also identified the need for formal assessment of services for evening and graduate students, as well as students in Stockton and other off-campus sites.

Priority Setting

The visiting team perceived a campus consensus that we need to establish priorities and focus our collective energies. The campus community indicated that a multitude of initiatives was often not funded or underfunded, thus diminishing their effectiveness and likelihood of success.

While the visiting team members acknowledged the many accomplishments of the University over the past few years, they also urged us to give focus to our campus initiatives to ensure that budget allocations are driven by these campus priorities. The Master Academic Planning process was cited as an effective means for identifying campus program priorities and aligning plans in student affairs, business/finance, and university relations.

With respect to academic priorities, the visiting team commended the dedication of faculty to undergraduate programs and the improvement of general education and liberal studies. It also noted the need for continuing campus discussion of the importance of funding the graduate programs, including the participation of graduate students in the teaching and learning process and in research projects.

The report cites the CSU Stanislaus Multi-Campus Regional Center in Stockton as a significant opportunity and challenge to serve the Stockton community. The visiting team notes considerable faculty concern regarding the impact that this involvement may have on the budget, curricula, and programs on campus and recommends that the University clearly and comprehensively communicate the relevance and impact of the MCRC to the campus community.

Budget Development

The visiting team notes that the campus has been engaged in various projects to improve budget allocation, administration, and accountability and commends the University for developing a clear and supportive relationship between centralized fiscal functions and units across campus. The team encourages the development of a more formal approach to integrating the planning and budgeting processes and continued efforts to increase the sophistication of departmental, college, and school level decision-makers.

Assessment of Educational Quality

The University's recent efforts and achievements in planning were recognized by the visiting team. However, they noted that the University needs to implement methods and organizational structures for gathering systematic information and using this information for institutional improvement.

The visiting team asserts that it is essential that the campus enhance student learning through the greater specification of degree objectives, including the undergraduate major and general education. It was noted that while departments have undertaken the assessment

of their programs, this effort should go beyond overall program effectiveness and provide evidence of the quality of student achievement. The team identified the graduate program assessment document as a model for evaluating student learning. To support the undergraduate and post-baccalaureate programs, comprehensive plans for assessment of resources for instructional technology and the library are necessary.

The team acknowledged that the academic program review process now requires more rigorous assessment and encourages the campus to continue to refine this process. They also note that the new Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning is a potentially powerful approach to assist faculty in improving teaching and connecting their efforts to enhanced learning. They observed that the initial funding for the Center has been minimal, and greater investment is essential for continuing faculty development.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Consistent with guidelines in the reaccreditation standards which challenge universities to engage in continuous improvement, WASC identified four areas for campus action: instructional technology, library, research, and assessment of student learning.

Instructional Technology

The visiting team indicated the urgent need for the campus to develop a comprehensive plan for providing adequate computer resources for faculty and students. The team echoed the concerns raised by many faculty relative to the growing critical role of technology for instructional delivery and the need for enhanced support for technology on campus.

Library

The Commission urges the University to develop a library assessment plan for enhancement of the collection and for increased student usage consistent with the University's emphasis on learning and high standards of student performance.

Research and Scholarship

The Commission expressed strong concern that the University has not yet reached consensus on the definition of research and scholarship consistent with the University's mission and in alignment with the learning-centered focus of the campus. They noted that little progress has been achieved since this citation was made in the 1990 accreditation review. We are required to bring this to closure and to ensure that the expectations for research and scholarship are made explicit and evident in personnel decisions. Moreover, it is imperative that the administration provide increased institutional support for faculty scholarship.

Assessment of Student Learning

The Commission stressed the critical importance of developing assessment of student learning and evaluating university processes to ensure our effectiveness. Their conclusion is that we do not have the data and systems necessary for meeting current and future needs.

Specifically, the visiting team report requires the University to implement the Academic Assessment Plan and follow through with its commitment to use assessment as a means to identify its strengths and weaknesses.

Through the use of quantitative and qualitative assessment methods for gathering information about institutional effectiveness, the campus is required to accomplish the following:

- establish, define, and assess a few critical measures of institutional quality;
- establish academic priorities, including “centers of excellence;”
- assess the needs and attitudes of entering students and link these to general education requirements;
- integrate data about student learning into the academic program review process;
- link the outcomes of institutional assessment with budget decisions; and
- coordinate campus resources for assessment, including greater leadership, more in-depth analysis, and more support to departments from institutional research.

This summary is a highlight of the major elements contained in the WASC report. There are other important WASC observations and recommendations in the report such as international programs, faculty governance, faculty evaluation, adjunct faculty, merit processes for staff, decision-making processes for budgeting, non-credit programs, and enrollment management.

Although we are already implementing many of the recommendations from the visiting team’s report, we have much work remaining. Our challenge is to ensure that our commitment to learning penetrates all institutional decisions and results in enhanced educational quality for all of our students. I pledge to you my commitment to continue the pursuit of excellence at CSU Stanislaus.

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<http://www.csustan.edu/english/WASC>