REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM

EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

To California State University, Stanislaus

March 1-3, 2010

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 Core Commitments 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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I. A. Description of Institution and Visit

<u>History and Mission</u>

CSU Stanislaus is part of the California State University, a 23-campus system across California. It began in 1957, when the State Legislature established what was then known as Stanislaus State College. In 1965, the College moved to its permanent campus. It was awarded university status and renamed California State University, Stanislaus in 1985. CSU Stanislaus is now a university of some 8,600 students with approximately 310 full-time and 210 part-time faculty. It offers 40 undergraduate degree programs, seven post-baccalaureate credential programs, 23 master's degrees, and the Ed.D. through six colleges.

Located in the Central Valley, CSU Stanislaus serves six counties in a rapidly growing region. With its main campus located in Turlock, the University has residential facilities for over 600 students but principally serves commuting students. It also has a branch campus in Stockton, where about 1,100 students are served in upper-division and graduate courses. CSU Stanislaus serves a highly diverse student population, including many first-generation and adult students, 30% of whom are Hispanic and 67% of whom are women. It has experienced steady enrollment growth for over 20 years and demand for college education remains strong in the service region. Financial constraints of the State of California have caused slight reductions in enrollments in the current year and previous year despite increased demand.

Faculty, staff, administrators, and students of CSU Stanislaus have a strong sense of mission and are committed to creating a learning environment which encourages all members of the campus community to expand their intellectual, creative, and social horizons.

Recent Accreditation History

CSU Stanislaus was first accredited by the Commission in 1963 and has been continuously accredited since then. The last comprehensive visit was in October 1998, and the Commission reaffirmed accreditation in 1999, scheduling the next comprehensive visit for fall 2008. Although initially asked to file a fifth-year interim report on recommendations of the 1998 team report, this request was cancelled to accommodate the new accreditation model. In the intervening period, the Commission acted to approve an off-campus M.S. in Genetic Counseling and an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership. The Capacity and Preparatory Review visit took place in fall 2008, and in February 2009 the Commission acted to continue accreditation of CSU Stanislaus and continue with the Educational Effectiveness Review scheduled for March 2010.

Description of Visit

The visiting team was composed of five members, all of whom had participated in the fall 2008 CPR visit. In preparation for the visit the team reviewed the institution's May 2006 proposal, prior accreditation and Commission actions, recent reports including the July 2008 CPR Report and the December 2009 EER Report, and many appendices, web-based documents, data, and other information contained on a CD. The team visited the Turlock campus on March 1-3, 2010. During the visit, the team met with the inquiry circles, a number of related, contributing committees, representatives of various offices, and faculty and administrative leadership groups and conducted separate open meetings for faculty and students. In addition, there was a meeting with members of the University's Foundation Board.

The team would like to acknowledge the hospitality and candor of the people it met with during its visit. The Vice Provost and Associate Vice President for Assessment and Quality Assurance, who as Accreditation Liaison Officer coordinated the visit, addressed all of the team's needs effectively and efficiently.

In addition, the team was impressed by two special exhibits that the University prepared for the team's visit. The first, a ubiquitous series of posters quoting students' reflecting on their learning experiences at CSU Stanislaus, provided a symbolic and imaginative representation of the University's commitment to student learning. More than a publicity effort, they became an effective means of involving students in the discussion of the mission of the University (CFR 1.1). The posters and a specially prepared DVD offered evidence of a deeply held campus value that students understand and can explain, thus attesting to the way faculty have communicated learning objectives (CFR 2.3).

I. B. The Institution's Educational Effectiveness Review Report: Alignment with the Proposal and Quality and Rigor of the Review and Report

Approach to and Intended Outcomes for the Review

In alignment with the Institutional Proposal, CSU Stanislaus organized its Educational Effectiveness review around four themes and posited three main outcomes for the review: 1) Demonstration of institutional core commitment to educational effectiveness; 2) Improvement of quality in areas identified by the Inquiry Circles; and 3) Refinement of institutional Core Indicators of Educational Quality in support of educational effectiveness. The institution elected to work toward these outcomes through the four inquiry circles, each of which had a core issue or theme to address in a comprehensive way. The four themes were: 1) how effectively does the University engage a highly diverse student population in learning; 2) how effectively does the University infrastructure support learning; 3) how effectively does the university create and sustain a community of faculty committed to teaching and learning; and 4) how effectively does the University support research, scholarship, and creative activity as appropriate to its mission. Each inquiry group identified specific researchable questions to guide and focus its work based initially on extensive and broad-ranging discussion.

Overall Quality of EER Report

The Educational Effectiveness Review Report was organized around the four themes mentioned above and consisted of six essays – one for each of the themes, along with an introductory essay and a concluding essay. The report was well-written and accurately described many of the key features and initiatives of the University. In addition, the report was accompanied by a wide variety of appendices and exhibits and included links to additional exhibits available on a web site. The supporting exhibits were well organized, easy to access, and mapped to the Standards and CFRs.

In addition, the team commends the University for its innovative and effective method for conducting its accreditation review by establishing and sustaining Inquiry Circles and for developing meaningful research agendas for them, which will advance institutional goals and improve educational effectiveness. Members of the Circles consistently reported that they greatly valued the experience of engaging in extended conversations about issues of importance, and many expressed a desire to continue their leadership on the issues on which their Circle focused.   Moreover, there was a strong interest in incorporating the learning and experience of all of the Inquiry Circles within a renewed strategic planning process (CFRs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.6).

I. C. Response to Issues Raised in the Capacity and Preparatory Review

In its letter accepting the Capacity and Preparatory Review team report and continuing the accreditation of the University in 2009, the WASC Commission highlighted three areas for attention and improvement: 1) Assessment strategies related to General Education; 2) Support for graduate-level programs; and 3) Definitions of research, scholarship and creative activity. Each of these areas was adopted within the current self study and is addressed both within the body of the Educational Effectiveness Review Report and in appendices of the report.

General Education Assessment

The Commission recommended that CSU Stanislaus "continue to refine and implement assessment strategies related to the General Education Curriculum, with a specific emphasis on the expanded use of direct measures for assessment of learning."

Since then, the University has completed a program review of General Education that included a review of all General Education courses, an alignment of individual courses with General Education goals, and the results of any assessment activities undertaken. An in-depth description and analysis of the General Education program review appears in section II. A. of this report.

Support for Graduate-level Programs

The Commission recommended that CSU Stanislaus "continue with the development of support for graduate-level programs, including related library resources and development of stated learning outcomes and their aligned assessment."

Since then, the University has taken a number of steps to address this recommendation, including adopting a process and guidelines for the review of graduate academic program review, expanding library database offerings in support of graduate programs, and updated and implemented the Graduate Assessment Plan. A description and analysis of these efforts appears in section II. A. of this report.

Definitions of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

The Commission recommended that CSU Stanislaus "continue to refine and implement definitions of research, scholarship, and creative activity as they related to faculty workload and decisions about promotions."

Since then, the University has worked diligently to address this issue and has demonstrated some progress on clarifying department expectations for research, scholarship, and creative activity. A complete analysis of this issue appears in section II. A. of this report.

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS UNDER THE STANDARDS

II. A. Evaluation of the Institution's Educational Effectiveness Inquiry

Theme 1: Engaging a Highly Diverse Student Population in Learning

This essay examined the quality of student learning at CSU Stanislaus and the effectiveness of the University in engaging its diverse body of students in learning.

Quality of Undergraduate and Graduate Learning

The primary direct measure of learning outcomes was the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). The CLA test, designed to be administered to samples of 100 freshmen and 100 seniors, provides measurement of learning on broad learning outcomes. Results of the CLA test showed that CSU Stanislaus seniors performed "Well Above" their expected level of performance for the overall test, and "Above" or "Well Above" their expected level of performance on the individual tasks. In addition, the "Value-Added Estimates" for CSU Stanislaus were "At" or "Above" the expected level. These findings provide direct evidence of the overall quality of undergraduate education at CSU Stanislaus (CFRs 2.2a, 2.6). However, because of sample size, CLA data are not useful for disaggregating for analysis of sub-group differences on these performance measures. In addition, the general nature of the measure does not yield information that would indicate possible actions the institution could take to enhance student learning.

Another direct measure was the Writing Proficiency Screening Test (WPST), which was designed as a diagnostic test for writing proficiency at the sophomore level. The data indicated that 80 to 87 percent of undergraduates in the past five years pass this test on the first attempt and that pass rates have increased in recent years. Although the WPST can be used as an indicator of writing that could incorporate other outcomes, e.g. global or multicultural understanding, it should be examined for reliability as a summative tool for competency for advancing to upper division writing and how it aligns with the expectations for performance in

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the upper division writing courses. The iSkills test, which is planned, could address other dimensions of information literacy for General Education not covered in the CLA (CFR 2.6).

To assess achievement of specific General Education learning goals, a number of indirect measures are used, including the *Individual Development and Educational Assessment* (IDEA) form, and *Graduating Senior Survey* (GSS). In general, results of these indirect measures suggest that students at CSU Stanislaus rate many of their individual courses as contributing to gains in General Education learning goals (CFR 2.6), although it should be noted that some of the measures had low response rates. Direct measures of specific outcomes within General Education are limited primarily to course grades, which are not accepted as measures of achievement of outcomes because they typically involve so much more than achievement of specific goals at specified levels of competence.

At the program level, Program Assessment Coordinators (PACs) continue to work well with their colleagues to promote and implement assessment of student learning in majors and programs. An expressed benefit of engaging departmental faculty around the issue of assessing student learning has been the improved articulation and communication of expectations for outcomes and for student performance (CFR 2.3). In addition, many programs report using direct measures of student learning and then applying the results to guide changes intended to enhance student learning (CFRs 2.4, 4.4).

At the graduate level, six graduate student learning goals have been developed and adopted, and a rubric has been developed for overall assessment of these goals.

Every graduate program has a thesis or other culminating project that can be used by students and programs to demonstrate learning outcomes at the conclusion of their respective programs. A university review using a three-category rubric for evaluation in 2008-09 found that approximately 60 percent of theses or projects were judged to be of high quality, 35 percent

good/competent, and 5 percent or fewer returned for improvement in order to meet graduation

standards (CFRs 2.2b, 2.6).

In addition, graduate student *Individual Development and Educational Assessment* (*IDEA*)

course evaluation data indicate substantial progress in achieving learning objectives:

approximately 80 percent of students rated their progress on the highest four rated objectives as

"exceptional" or "substantial." The *Graduate School Exit Survey* results (combined 2005-06 and

2006-07 data) were consistent with those assessments. Over 90 percent of students indicated

"good" or "excellent" achievement for four of the six graduate student learning goals and the

other two rated 77 percent and 83 percent (CFR 2.6).

<center>Quality of Engaging Students in Learning</center>

The primary measures of student engagement were the National Survey of Student

engagement (NSSE) and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE). Results were

organized around three categories of engagement – academic rigor, active and collaborative

learning, and student-faculty interactions. Although both first-year students and seniors reported

a high degree of academic challenge, faculty responses were consistently below national

averages. At the graduate level, both students and faculty responses on a number of items

indicated that CSU Stanislaus graduate students are engaged in a variety of high-level learning

activities in their graduate programs. The survey findings were supplemented with additional

studies, such as an analysis of course syllabi and an analysis of assessment data for graduate

studies. Taken together, the findings indicate a high level of academic challenge for both

undergraduate and graduate studies (CFR 2.1).

Undergraduate students also reported a high level of active and collaborative learning.

However, responses to questions about student-faculty interactions were less favorable, and

faculty responses were consistent with this assessment. Although undergraduate and graduate

students and faculty rated highly such engagement activities as using email to contact instructors,

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other activities such as working with faculty members on activities other than coursework were rated quite low.

Impact of Diversity

The diversity of CSU Stanislaus' student body is a strength of the institution, and students from diverse backgrounds express high levels of satisfaction with their experience at CSU Stanislaus (CFR 1.5). Students at the campus open forum had uniformly positive comments about the dedication of faculty; their willingness to go beyond expectations to assist all students with getting courses needed and with advising; and the quality of instruction, including the value of practices designed to connect their in-class learning with real-world experiences. As part of the emerging culture of evidence on the campus, the Student Success Committee is engaged in developing methods and tools to allow the campus to identify where the high impact, engaged practices associated with deeper learning, especially for less well prepared students, are occurring, who takes or participates in them, and how frequently. The research would help ensure that all students enjoy the benefits of participating in the pedagogies and experiences that have been linked to student success. The culture of evidence that is emerging on the campus is assisting in helping campus offices and units to adopt policies and actions that may improve student success for all students (CFRs 2.10, 4.3).

CSU Stanislaus enjoys the distinction of being designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). The diverse student body appears to be satisfied with their experience on the campus and the opportunities provided. As displayed in the Graduating Senior Survey findings, however, not all student populations, e.g. African American and Native American students, experience the same level of satisfaction and success at the campus. The expansion of collecting and disaggregating data and information for specific student populations as part of the developing culture of evidence will allow the institution to better focus and elaborate actions and policies to

enhance the opportunities for all students to benefit from the generally positive experience that students report through NSSE and other self-reporting surveys.

What Works

CSU Stanislaus has several programs designed to provide students with learning opportunities connected to improved student success, e.g. First Year Experience, the Summit Program, the Faculty Mentor Program and service learning. The evidence presented on the positive impact for students in these programs supports the value of the pedagogies and practices associated with the programs. The EER report also reports the reduction and marginalization of many of these programs due to budgetary constraints. The evidence supporting the positive impact of aspects of these programs on student success and learning warrants systematic attention and exploration of how these positive pedagogies and practices might be maintained or sustained through creative alternative approaches and reconfigurations or combinations of existing programs, activities and resources. The challenge is how to expand the number of students who can enjoy the benefits of these practices within existing or even reduced financial resources.

Theme 2: The University Environment for Supporting Learning

The faculty, staff, and students involved in Inquiry Circle 2 addressed the broad question: how effectively does the University infrastructure support learning? Specifically, Theme 2 addressed how effectively the University assesses student learning and how effectively the environment supports student learning.

Assessing University-wide Assessment

The primary centralized support structures for assessment are the offices of Institutional Research and Assessment and Quality Assurance. The Institutional Research office is responsible for the collection, analysis, and reporting of data on institutional quality and student

learning, whereas the Office of Assessment and Quality Assurance is responsible for facilitating and coordinating assessment activities and mechanisms. The team noted that since the CPR visit there has been an improvement in the quality of institutional research functions (CFR 4.5).

Another important component of University-wide assessment is the set of eight Core Indicators of Educational Quality (CFR 1.2). The Core Indicators were reviewed in 2008-09, and as a result several measures were added and other measures were cross-listed under multiple Indicators. It was also concluded that several measures within the Core Indicators were based on limited data sets and that the University should continue to work on improving response rates. The team concurs with this assessment.

Beyond centralized functions, the process for assessment is complicated, and the "integrated assessment flow chart" depicts the various groups which play a role in the process and the flow of information related to assessment. Although the visiting team questioned the complexity of the process and need for numerous councils and committees, those involved understood the interaction of the many players and reported that their multi-pronged approach has resulted in broad awareness and buy-in of the faculty and staff. The high level of engagement evident on campus in regard to student learning and assessment confirms the efficacy of the approach CSU Stanislaus has taken (CFR 2.4).

The campus has built a strong infrastructure for the assessment of student learning, and the evidence can be found in the assessment plans and data generated at the course and program level on an annual basis. The annual assessment updates from the Program Assessment Coordinators are shared with the Associate Vice President of Assessment and Quality Assurance, Deans, and the Faculty Coordinator for the Assessment of Student Learning.

The assessment process has also been aligned with and incorporated into the academic program review process which occurs every seven years for each program. Requiring assessment reports on both an annual and seven year interval has the potential to ensure that the

attention to educational effectiveness is sustained. The visiting team explored with the WASC

Self Study Team the potential for the annual up-dates to be used to monitor the continuous

improvement of the program assessment efforts. The team recommends that the Faculty

Coordinator for the Assessment of Student Learning consider the ways in which program

assessment efforts can be improved and sustained via the annual up-dates (CFRs 2.6, 4.6).

<div align="center">Academic Program Review</div>

As noted above, the Academic Program Review (APR) process is conducted at seven year

intervals and is now integrated with the annual departmental assessment activities led by the

Program Assessment Coordinators (PACs). Department or program faculty have developed

learning goals and established student learning outcomes for each program that are included in

their APR (CFR 2.3).

Eight academic program reviews were available to the team in the exhibit room:

Anthropology, Communications Studies, English, Geology, Honors program, Liberal Studies,

Mathematics, and Philosophy. The reviews are comprehensive in scope, concluding with

implementation plans that are negotiated with budget and planning committee at the college

level, and finally with the Dean and Provost. There seemed to be some question about whether

the implementation plans were monitored, and the team recommends that there be a follow-up

mechanism to ensure that the plans are enacted (as possible, given the resource constraints)

(CFRs 4.2, 4.3).

The assessment of student learning outcomes is addressed to some degree in each program

review, but the quality of the assessment efforts is uneven. Most programs included indirect

measures of student learning, and some described direct measures such as the analyses of final

projects using rubrics. Per campus policy, however, the APR report narratives rarely included

actual data that were analyzed and explored for their usefulness in evaluating the program's

effectiveness (CFR 2.7). The institution reports that data tables provided by Institutional

Research are included in each program's APR appendices. There was no indication that comparative data from external sources had been used, and few departments used external reviewers (CFR 4.4). The team recommends that the APR process be strengthened with the use of external benchmarks and reviewers.

The APR procedures were assessed by the University Educational Policies Committee (UEPC), which determined that the procedures were in the "developed" to "highly developed" range. Based on the review of the visiting team, the implementation of the procedures still needs work. There is evidence that programs are using their assessments to propose positive changes to their programs, but the use of direct measures of student learning must be expanded (CFRs 2.4, 2.7).

<center>General Education Review</center>

A program review of General Education has been completed since the CPR visit (CFRs 2.7, 4.4). The Faculty Director of General Education (newly appointed) and the General Education Advisory Group engaged in a systematic effort to review all General Education courses, identify and align goals and objectives of General Education, and review the results of any assessment activities undertaken.

There are seven broad goals established for general education, and the review provides an overview of the assessment of student learning and student achievement in each of these goals. Faculty members are still working on developing learning objectives and assessment plans for the 17 sub-areas. The review notes that most assessment of general education has taken place at the course level, and the need now is to shift to the program level. The relatively recent CSU System EO1033 may provide a way for General Education to be assessed across courses and departments by providing outcomes for General Education. Although the EO1033 outcomes differ, there are many commonalities that could easily be mapped onto the existing CSUS GE outcomes (CFR 2.2a), which draw heavily from the essential learning outcomes defined by the

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Liberal Education and American Promise (LEAP) initiative and which are a valuable resource in this process.

The implementation plan encourages faculty to move toward embedded assessment in courses or assessment of capstones, i.e., more direct rather than indirect measures. Two direct measures of student learning are now used to assess the learning outcomes of general education: the Writing Proficiency Screening Test and the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). Although these measures provide useful information, it is wise for the campus to supplement these efforts with direct measures that enable the assessment of the learning outcomes specific to the University's General Education goals.

A faculty focus group reviewed the draft *General Education Assessment Plan* and the direct and indirect measures available for the assessment of general education, offering a series of recommendations for improvement. According to their self-rating, General Education program assessment is between the "emerging" and "developed" levels as defined by the WASC rubric for General Education Assessment. The visiting team concurs with this assessment and encourages the campus to continue their good work in examining the role that general education plays in the education of their graduates (CFRs 2.2, 2.3).

The team noted that the review of the general education program was thoughtful and thorough, and the resulting recommendations should provide a strong foundation for the General Education Advisory group to make improvements to the program (CFR 4.7).

<div align="center">Graduate Program Review</div>

As noted in the previous section, six graduate student learning goals have been developed and adopted across all programs, and a rubric has been developed for overall assessment of those goals. The Graduate Council also refined its template for graduate curriculum maps to display the alignment of the six graduate learning goals and each graduate program's student learning

objectives. A rubric has been designed to assess the learning goals for annual reporting of achievement.

The Graduate Council made substantial revisions to the Academic Program Review (APR) procedures to enable departments to assess the quality of student learning through regular processes. The Graduate Council also developed criteria for the evaluation of graduate APRs and a structure to ensure comprehensive and consistent evaluation of quality for graduate programs. The graduate programs included in the APRs available for the team to review provided information on their assessments of student learning, but the team recommends that the programs continue to work on increasing their development and adoption of direct measures. (CFRs 2.2, 2.3)

<div align="center">The Library</div>

Library user satisfaction data, especially at the undergraduate level, consistently have revealed relatively high levels of satisfaction with the University Library Services. Information literacy instruction, including both class sessions taught by librarians and in-depth consultations between students and reference librarians, remains a chief strategy for equipping students as effective researchers.

The Library Support Unit Review found that the number of students who participated in library instruction had almost doubled in the previous decade, and noted that "mechanisms must be developed that will link these activities to successful student learning outcomes and provide direct measures of effectiveness." A library instruction program assessment plan has been drafted and is being refined, and the University Library has begun to collect assessment data for its instructional efforts. Another finding from the Support Unit Review was the absence of discipline faculty voices in tracking the Library's effectiveness from their point of view. The Library is working to address this need (CFR 3.6).

Co-Curricular Learning

The environment for student learning and success is significantly enhanced by the variety of services and supports provided by the campus. Program reviews have been conducted in a number of support units, and the reviews include an evaluation of the ways in which these units contribute to student learning and success. For example, Student Affairs has developed broad learning outcomes for the division, and each department within the division has established learning outcomes and department action plans. Their support unit reviews include consideration of the learning outcomes and action plans, and include input and involvement from entry level staff, faculty, students – even Deans served on review teams. The results of the reviews have led to specific action items, including developing better measures of diversity activities, improving advising, and a more formal approach to assessment.

Conclusions

The University demonstrates the capacity to support student learning through a comprehensive structure for assessment. The revised *Academic Program Review* process has made progress in promoting the assessment of student learning at both the baccalaureate and graduate levels, and support unit reviews have led to positive changes to the learning environment. Leadership, guidance, and support are provided by the Office of Assessment and Quality Assurance and the Office of Institutional Research. Further, it is evident that the infrastructure for faculty assessment activities continues to be enhanced by the Faculty Development Center, the Faculty Assessment Coordinator, and the Program Assessment Coordinators. The team encourages the institution to continue the development and implementation of direct assessment of student learning (CFRs 1.2, 4.4).

Theme 3: A Community of Faculty Committed to Teaching and Learning

Through this theme, CSU Stanislaus has continued its reflection on the principal mission of the University and its commitment to teaching and learning. Throughout the University's self-study, CPR and EER, the academic community has sustained its focus on the faculty's role in teaching and learning through a dedicated Inquiry Circle and campus-wide discussion of key issues (CFR 4.1). In particular, this essay focused University expectations for teaching proficiency, faculty development to support teaching effectiveness, and using student data to improve teaching effectiveness.

University Expectations for Teaching Proficiency

One of the central recommendations of the WASC response to the CPR report and visit had been to clarify the University's commitment to teaching in the context of increased expectations for research through explicit statements at the department, college, and university levels. In 2008-09, the University discussed this recommendation through a series of meetings and forums, and it adopted in May 2009 a new statement for retention, promotion and tenure policies (RPT) that unambiguously states: "Teaching proficiency is the primary qualification for retention, promotion, and tenure." The faculty senate also mandated each department to elaborate on the criteria used to assess faculty with regard to teaching, scholarship, qualifications, and service. This mandate also included provision for stating how the department addresses the primacy of teaching and how the department supports a faculty development process to assist faculty be successful (CFRs 3.2, 3.3, 3.4).

The University is to be commended for the seriousness and energy with which it has addressed the CPR concerns, as well as for its progress to date. However, as the University itself well knows through its focused discussion of teaching during the review, this commitment must be the subject of continuous reflection and renewal. The actual departmental implementation of the mandates is uneven and reflects differing stages of engagement as represented in the elaboration of "criteria" and the statements about faculty development. [It is important to note that CSU Stanislaus uses the term "criteria" in the context of elaborations to refer to areas of faculty work—i.e., teaching, research, scholarship and creative activities, and service—plus qualifications or professional preparation. This is in contrast to the more typical definition of criteria as "standards or rules by which a judgment can be made." Perhaps as a consequence, elaborations for the most part do not address substantive achievements or quality of performance.]

Many departments have already updated their departmental statements (elaborations) of RPT; several are pending review by the University RPT Committee; and several departments are apparently still in the process of updating their elaborations. A review of all of the currently approved elaborations suggests that the University must continue to develop departmental specifications of the standards used to judge faculty work in the three usual areas of teaching, research (scholarship and creative activity), and service. Few of the current departmental elaborations provide clear guidance to faculty who are preparing themselves for RPT about expected levels of attainment with regard to either quality or scope. All of the elaborations list types of evidence that may be offered to document attainment, but few specify the levels of attainment that are sufficient for retention or promotion, and fewer still offer indications of what might be considered excellent beyond satisfactory or sufficient (CFR 3.3).

Nonetheless, the current process of reviewing departmental elaborations indicates a willingness to engage in these discussions and to continue to refine the expectations for faculty performance with a clear priority assigned to teaching. While it is the University's prerogative to develop its own processes and it may elect to emphasize the primacy of departmental reviews for RPT, the fact that colleges and deans play a role in evaluating candidates suggests that there may be value in developing college-level criteria for evaluation to apply across the departments within the unit as well as uniform practices regarding the formation of peer review committees and other procedural matters to ensure essential fairness among similar departments within a college.

Based on the extensive discussion of the primacy teaching and learning during at least the past five years, CSU Stanislaus will undoubtedly continue to refine its criteria (i.e., standards by which judgments can be made) for retention, promotion and tenure with regard to both teaching and research (scholarship and creative activity) at the department, college and university levels, completing the review and renewal process initiated in 2009 with the Faculty Senate resolutions

(CFR 3.3). Even as the University has affirmed the primacy of departmental elaborations, the role of both the colleges and the University in evaluating candidates could usefully be articulated in terms of criteria (standards for judging performance) and procedures to affirm shared values (such as the learning objectives of General Education at the University level or the linkage between teaching and research, scholarship and creative activity at the college level) and to achieve the respective visions for the colleges and the University as coherent communities of scholars committed to student success (CFRs 1.1, 1.2, 2.4, 2.8, 2.9).

<div align="center">Faculty Development to Support Teaching Effectiveness</div>

As a part of its institutional inquiry and despite the limited prospects during the current financial crisis, the University has reaffirmed the importance of hiring faculty who share a commitment to the primacy of teaching and learning. Given the time devoted to teaching at CSU Stanislaus, new faculty should fully appreciate expectations for teaching. Most department chairs have indicated that they engage in a range of activities at the hiring stage to permit candidates to demonstrate their preparation for work at CSU Stanislaus through such practices as pre-screening candidates via telephone interviews and reference checks regarding their teaching experience, requiring seminars on pedagogy, having candidates teach a class, having students meet and assess candidates, seeking teaching reviews from prior employment, and evaluating statements of teaching philosophy. Through departments and through the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, there are opportunities for mentoring and for faculty development, including an extensive, well-planned orientation program for all new faculty members. These practices extend to hiring and supporting lecturers (CFRs 3.1, 3.3, 3.4).

Faculty development thus begins at CSU Stanislaus with hiring and continues throughout a faculty member's career. There are numerous opportunities for continuous improvement, most notably though the programs of the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and through the analysis of both student and faculty performance. The University has given a high

priority to helping faculty improve assessment practices, including the use of direct measures of assessing student attainment at the course, major, and General Education levels. Moreover, there are a series of programs designed to assist faculty to use technology effectively in teaching and learning (CFR 3.4).

CSU Stanislaus is to be commended for developing and maintaining a strong faculty development program that supports its commitment to teaching and learning at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Further, the University is commended for helping establish a sense of a scholarly community across colleges and departments through its faculty development programs and the creation of such vehicles for sharing experiences as *Faculty Voices*, awards for outstanding professor and for faculty development, "teacher-scholar narratives," and publication of analyzed and interpreted survey data.

Theme 4: Faculty Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity and Student Learning

As part of the California State University system, CSU Stanislaus engages in research, scholarship, and creative activity (RSCA) in support of its teaching mission (CFRs 1.6, 2.8, 2.9). This essay addresses how effectively the research, scholarship, and creative activities environment at CSU Stanislaus has impacted faculty research and student learning.

The Environment for Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

Faculty work in the area of RSCA has grown in size and sophistication, as evidenced by the information contained in the annual *Research Compendium*. The compendium from 2006-07 reports more than 1,500 research, scholarly, and creative activities (RSCA), including 180 publications (primarily journal articles, books, and monographs), 400 presentations at conferences, and 200 community outreach efforts. In addition, the Outstanding RSCA Professor Award, created ten years ago, has provided focus and visibility for the campus's efforts in this respect (CFR 2.8).

One of the most obvious indicators for RSCA is awarded external grants, in which the campus has seen an increase from $13 million awarded value in 2003-2004 to almost $18 million awarded value during 2007-2008. This is a moderate, but significant, expansion. As these figures include the total awarded value over the life of the grant, the annual awarded values are lower but in proportion to a 12-month award period in order to reflect multi-year grants. During the period in question, the number of active grants rose only from 65 to 68. This suggests that the number of PIs has grown only slightly. The team encourages the campus to make recruitment of some additional research-active faculty members in selected fields a priority. An increase in the number of PIs would not only bring more extramural funds to the institution but also would create more opportunities for student engagement in RSCA (CFR 2.8, 2.9).

The campus has a competitive internal grants program for which the average award is $2,599. The campus might wish to use some of these awards as seed money to prepare applications for external grants and perhaps also to recognize the efforts of those who submitted unsuccessful external grant applications. In addition, these internal grants could be used to supplement extramural funding. In other words, to the degree possible, they should be used as leverage. Naturally, there will be many cases in which this is not appropriate or desirable, but the campus should carefully determine what the best use of this money might be.

Sabbatical leaves are essential to supporting faculty engaged in RSCA. The team was pleased to see that the number of sabbaticals requested and granted has increased considerably over the past few years (CFR 3.4). The campus should continue to expand the sabbatical program. Ideally, all faculty members should have access to sabbaticals in order to renew themselves and strengthen their RSCA and teaching agendas. Perhaps some internal grants could be devoted to sabbatical projects. External grants, such as the Fulbright, can also help in this regard, and the campus has already experienced some success in this area.

Consistent with CSU's belief in the importance of RSCA for its teaching mission, the campus has been revising its departmental elaborations to integrate this component (CFRs 3.8, 3.11, 4.1, 4.6). As the campus refines its vision through practice, departmental elaborations should be updated to reflect and promote such evolution and offer clear performance criteria. Issues to be considered further include clear criteria for the evaluation of RSCA for the tenure and promotion process.

The campus has a strong faculty development program which offers a variety of workshops, including orientation sessions for new faculty. First and second year professors have access to mentors both from their own and other disciplines. The team encourages the campus to continue these activities. Junior faculty members should be given enough free time to develop strong RSCA and teaching portfolios (CFR 3.3, 3.4).

Effects of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity on Student Learning

There is evidence that the faculty's engagement in RSCA is having a positive effect on student learning (CFRs 2.4, 2.5, 2.9). FSSE data suggest that faculty frequently incorporate their research into the classroom. In addition, under the leadership and guidance of faculty, student research, scholarship, and creative activity have become an important component of programs across the campus. At the undergraduate level, for example, students participate in honors programs, capstone courses and research competitions, among other activities. Not only do these activities enhance learning, but they have the potential to enhance faculty-student interactions.

At the graduate level, students engage in research projects, publications and conferences. Institutional Review Board (IRB) applications by graduate students have doubled in the last three years, an impressive indicator of graduate student RSCA (CFRs 2.9, 2.12). Faculty members seem to be mentoring graduate students and, increasingly, collaborating with them on projects, as the culture of the institution becomes more focused on RSCA as the basis for teaching.

The campus has a procedure for assessing graduate-level academic culture, which shows its seriousness about RSCA-based teaching. In addition, it assesses graduate student learning in various ways, including graduate program review. As noted in a previous section, the campus appears to have a solid review process in place (CFRs 2.1, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10). In many programs, this process includes external reviewers. Perhaps this practice should expand to include all programs, as it is always helpful to get outside perspectives. In addition, the campus should have clear procedures for following up on graduate program reviews. In particular, the campus should monitor implementation progress.

The team encourages the campus to further explore the possibility of creating a leadership position focused on graduate studies (e.g., a Dean of the Graduate School) (CFR 3.10). In addition to overseeing graduate program reviews and follow-ups, such an administrator could facilitate campus-wide strategic planning, including enrollment planning, as well as represent the campus at national meetings of graduate deans, where useful discussions about best practices take place. An administrator experienced in managing doctoral programs could be very helpful to the campus as it develops its RSCA capabilities. He or she could also focus on enhancing graduate student support by helping graduate programs tap a larger number of funding sources. Indeed, this administrator could have a dual position as Dean of Graduate Studies and Vice President for Research and oversee all RSCA on campus.

The library is an important resource for faculty RSCA. While the CSU Stanislaus library seems to be doing a good job meeting the needs of the campus, some graduate students and faculty members report occasional deficiencies (CFR 3.6). As the campus continues to expand its RSCA, a special effort will have to be made to expand library holdings and access to other collections. This expansion should be targeted towards fields offering graduate degrees, particularly the doctoral degree. The campus is aware of this need and has already assigned a

librarian to work several hours per week with the College of Education, which is commendable. We encourage the campus to continue to improve its services at this level.

II. B. Student Success

Consistent with its mission, CSU Stanislaus demonstrates a strong commitment to student success. The campus sets, monitors, and reports persistence and graduation goals through such system-wide programs as the CSU Accountability Process and the CSU Graduation Initiative. The Student Success Committee, comprised of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs administrators, faculty, and students, serves as a clearinghouse for data and projects related to student success.

CSU Stanislaus uses the comparative data available through the CLA to assess the relative strength of their retention and graduation rates. Compared to the 176 schools participating in the CLA in 2007-08, CSU Stanislaus performs extremely well in first-year retention with a rate of 81%, which is "Well Above" the expected performance level. Indeed, the University does better than 99 percent of the176 participating undergraduate institutions.

With a four-year graduation rate of 20%, CSU Stanislaus performs better than 72 percent of the CLA schools, and performs "Above" the expected level. Moreover, with a six-year graduation rate of 50%, CSU Stanislaus performs better than 96 percent of the 176 CLA undergraduate institutions, and earned a performance level at "Well Above" the expected level.

The Institutional Research office produces a series of reports entitled, *Analysis Briefs,* and in March of 2009, they reported on CSU-Stanislaus retention and graduation rates in comparison to other CSU campuses. From the *Brief*: "In summary, only three campuses were consistently in the top five ranks for retention, 4-year graduation rate, and 6-year graduation rate: Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, San Diego State University, and CSU Stanislaus, in that order."

In addition, on its website the Institutional Research office posts data reports on retention and graduation rates, disaggregated by gender and ethnicity, as part of the University's Core Indicators of Educational Quality. These reports show that although overall retention and graduation rates at CSU Stanislaus are strong, the rates for certain subgroups (such as African American students and American Indian students) are considerably lower.

The Student Success Committee acknowledged that accessibility of data reports is something it could work on and described a "Retention Data Dashboard" project that is currently on hold.

II. C. Other Issues Arising from the Standards and CFRs

The accreditation team began its visit with an awareness of several critical factors affecting the future of CSU Stanislaus. Most notably, the announced statewide "day of action" scheduled for March 4 promised to compromise the University's ability to function fully in a manner appropriately reflective of the extensive preparations made for the visit (CFR 1.9). Since some faculty, staff, and students may have been unable or unwilling to participate in planned meetings, the University requested that the dates of the visit be adjusted. The visit occurred before the scheduled day of action.

Additionally, the team was made aware of a faculty vote of no confidence in the CSU Stanislaus president. The vote was taken in November 2009. There were also reports of a faculty censure of the interim provost regarding a letter that appeared in an area newspaper. Both the president and faculty discussed these issues with the visiting team. The visiting team's consensus is that three issues had become catalysts for the faculty vote: an article written by the president that appeared in a fall issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the president's decision to end the winter term, and other actions taken by the president to address the current budget crisis. Throughout the visit, these issues surfaced in most discussions and when they did

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not, they were always implicit in comments. The key concerns around these issues focused on how the decisions had been made (CFR 3.8).

Members of the CSU Stanislaus Foundation met with the team and among other comments strongly supportive of the University affirmed their appreciation of and support for the president, which they had made public in a full-page advertisement in a local newspaper.

The team appreciates the candor of all parties in recognizing these issues and their willingness to acknowledge "the moose on the table," to borrow a colloquialism. And the team acknowledges the best efforts of all parties to ensure that these disputes and strong differences of views about appropriate conduct of various parties have not adversely affected student learning and success. Indeed, the team has offered a commendation to the University and all of its members for its professional conduct in sustaining a high level of educational effectiveness and integrity despite the strongly held feelings exacerbated by the financial crisis.

Because of the growing concerns about the implications of the budget crisis as noted in the preceding section and because of the seriousness of the issues regarding tensions between central University administration and the faculty, the team concluded that the current matter cannot go unaddressed. It has and will continue to threaten educational effectiveness unless there is a resolution. Accordingly, the team has a substantial and extensive recommendation regarding next steps to be taken by the University.

II. D. Impact of the Economic Recession and the State Budget Crisis

The current budget crisis has had a profound impact on CSU Stanislaus, and one of the most important observations made by the visiting team is that the University community— faculty, administrators, staff, and community leaders—have all unstintingly rallied to ensure that the educational effectiveness and academic quality of the University has not been compromised by budget reductions. However, all parties recognize that the current levels of activity and

commitment cannot be sustained and that actions must be taken to ensure program quality and integrity within very real resource constraints.

The commitment of the entire Stanislaus community—faculty, staff, and administrators— to maintaining educational effectiveness, program integrity, and overall academic excellence in the face of already significant budget reductions is truly commendable. Students have benefitted from extra efforts and commitments of time by the entire University staff. This commitment is noteworthy and praiseworthy.

Regardless of the exact data, there is nearly uniform agreement that CSU Stanislaus has distinguished itself among CSU campuses by its high student retention and graduation rates, by the high quality of teaching conducted by full-time faculty, and by the reduced reliance on part-time faculty. Ironically, the University's very commitment to student success and support of learning through its concerted efforts to engage as many full-time faculty as possible for teaching – especially tenured and tenure track faculty – has become a source of concern because there is little buffer in the numbers of part time faculty who might not be renewed in response to reduced budgets. Among CSU campuses, Stanislaus may have to eliminate full time lecturer or tenure track (perhaps even tenured) positions in order to remain within authorized budget and enrollment levels. Faculty and administrators are very much aware of the potential decisions that may have to be reached during the current year as the actual budget situation for 2010-11 becomes more certain. This realization has contributed to speculation, anxiety, and uncertainty that in turn will inevitably erode the current high level of morale.

The University is taking appropriate actions to address the current state of the budget crisis although there are concerns as noted in section II.C regarding communication and longer range planning in the context of decision-making. In its CPR review, the visiting team noted that CSU Stanislaus should anticipate growing financial constraints and take steps to prepare for the future by "thoughtfully centralizing some of its decision-making to support the continued development

of common, or shared, programs . . . by building on the current strategic planning and resource allocation processes" (CFRs 1.3, 3.5, 3.8, 4.1, 4.2); it is not clear how such centralization may have positively affected the institution.

The University has made a commitment to continue program-level assessment coordinators despite current and pending staffing reductions as a very tangible indication of sustained support for assessment of student learning (CFRs 2.3-2.7). Similarly, the University is committed to sustaining its institutional research capacity (2.10), to improving advising and student services, as indicated by the acquisition of an on-line advising system (CFR 2.12), and to maintaining current levels of student services (CFR 2.13). While department chairs and deans express growing concern about the implications of eliminating low-enrolling courses on the ability of undergraduate and graduate students alike to complete degrees in a timely manner (CFR 1.7), they do not believe this has become a matter of widespread concern yet. Similarly, adequate faculty staffing has been preserved for the current year. Instead, the concerns are focused on the 2010-11 academic year and beyond, since current special efforts made by faculty and staff may not be sustainable. Further budget cuts will have a direct impact on the number of courses that can be offered, as well as on class sizes.

II. E. Ed.D. Program in Educational Leadership

The doctoral program in educational leadership is the campus's first and only doctoral program, and a great deal of effort has gone into getting it off the ground and integrating it into the fabric of the campus. The program, which includes a P-12 track and a community college leadership track, is directed by an expert with practical experience in this field. At present, the program has 18 core faculty members and 20 affiliated faculty. This includes four professors with very active RSCA agendas appointed recently to meet the specific needs of the program (CFRs 3.2, 3.10, 3.11, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4).

The program has 40 students, recruited mostly from the surrounding area. The students are largely self-supporting, as one would expect for this kind of degree. Many of these students have worked or are working in the field of education and need doctoral-level training to enhance their professional prospects. Thus, this is a very motivated and dedicated group of students. The student cohort organization helps the students bond with one another and facilitates mutual assistance in support of their career goals. The size of the cohorts, however, is uneven – cohort #1 has 27 students, while cohort #2 has 13. An effort should be made to have a more balanced cohort composition – 15 to 20 students per cohort would be a more manageable model. To meet the needs of students in a large six-county region, cohort #3 will be taught in Stockton, which may tend to isolate the students from the other cohorts and from the campus.

The campus has made a large effort to develop a doctoral culture to support the students in the doctoral program, who in turn should positively affect the RSCA of the campus (CFRs 2.9, 3.11). In the short time it has been in existence, the doctoral program already has fostered student publications and lectures, as well as participation in campus cultural activities. Although it is too soon to evaluate the success of the doctoral program, the team was impressed by the energy, enthusiasm and care with which faculty members and administrators are treating this enterprise, and encourages the campus to continue to strengthen its doctoral culture.

SECTION III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CAPACITY AND PREPARATORY REVIEW AND THE EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

Commendations

1. The entire campus is to be commended for the broad engagement and commitment to the success of students. The pride and enthusiasm for working with students is palpable and permeates faculty, administrative, and staff conversations.

2. The University is commended for its innovative and effective method for conducting its accreditation review by establishing and sustaining Inquiry Circles and for developing

meaningful research agendas for them, which will advance institutional goals and improve educational effectiveness.

3. CSU Stanislaus is to be commended for developing and maintaining a strong faculty development program that supports its commitment to teaching and learning at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

4. The University is commended for its assessment practices, which have been greatly enhanced since the CPR visit as reflected in the use of data to improve programs and curricula, the attention to assessment data in the academic program reviews, and the use of student learning outcomes data in improving pedagogy. Specifically, during this period of financial constraint, the University is commended for its continuing investment in the Program Assessment Coordinators, who have worked with their colleagues to ensure educational effectiveness through continuous assessment programs.

5. The emergence of a culture of evidence based on institutional data and disaggregated analyses is becoming a foundation for policy development and decision making, for which the University is commended. As one important example, the Student Success Committee brings together students, faculty, student and academic affairs representatives, and the Institutional Research Office to identify and investigate issues that promise to improve academic attainment for all students at the University.

6. The University is commended for the comprehensive and insightful review of General Education that was conducted since the CPR visit. The review provides thoughtful recommendations and an implementation plan that should ensure that the general education program is coherent and focused on educational goals central to the mission of the University. The review provides a foundational roadmap for significant progress in enhancing the meaning, structure and outcomes of a General Education for all undergraduates.

7. Faculty are commended for developing and employing high impact practices and active pedagogies, especially in engaging students in research, service learning, learning communities, and internships.

Recommendations

1. Based on extensive discussions of the primacy of teaching and learning during at least the past five years, CSU Stanislaus should continue to refine its criteria (i.e., standards by which judgments can be made) for retention, promotion and tenure with regard to both teaching and research (scholarship and creative activity) at the department, college and university levels, completing the review and renewal process initiated in 2009 with the Faculty Senate resolutions.

2. As already noted, attention and commitment to the assessment of student learning is broad and deep across the University. However, in many departments the program assessment coordinators need to model and encourage the development of direct measures that provide evidence that the students have, in fact, learned what the courses and programs intended them to learn (CFRs 2.2, 4.4).

3. We have commended the significant progress of the University in developing program reviews since the CPR, but we recommend that as the institution gains experience in administering program reviews that it also pay attention to best practices , incorporating periodic and systematic monitoring of implementation plans, using external evidence and benchmarks, and engaging external reviewers (drawing on remote, electronic, participation when necessary to reduce costs).

4. In the CPR report, the team made specific recommendations for the improvement of general education, and despite the fine review that was completed since then, these recommendations bear repeating:

a. Document that there is substantial progress in its direct assessment of authentic student work, which ensures that each graduate has met the objectives of both the departmental program and the General Education program;

b. Communicate systematically and comprehensively to all students (and to faculty, advisors, and other key staff) the expectations of General Education for both transfer and first year students;

c. Ensure that General Education is a vital and central part of CSU Stanislaus' mission. (CFRs 1.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, and 2.12)

In addition, programs such as the Summit and First-year Experiences have been recognized for their contribution to the quality of general education. As the campus sets priorities in light of the current fiscal crisis, the team recommends that the University consider how these positive pedagogies and practices of these exemplary programs might be maintained or sustained through creative exploration of alternative approaches, reconfigurations or combinations of existing programs, activities and resources. Further, a process with appropriate criteria should be established for the periodic recertification of General Education courses to ensure that learning outcomes are embedded and renewed in the general education curriculum.

5. With full appreciation for the fact that the state's current financial crisis has intensified at a time of increased demand and higher expectations, CSU Stanislaus can fulfill its mission and ensure a sustainable, high-quality university only if it engages in collaborative and inclusive, faculty-engaged planning processes that are fact-based, values-oriented, and aligned in all aspects with the primacy of the academic mission (CFRs 1.1 and 1.2). Accountable, responsible, high-performing, and effective *administrative and faculty leadership* alike require nothing less (CFRs 1.3 and 3.11). An organization committed to learning and improvement demands a well-understood process for making hard, immediate decisions in

the context of long-term (strategic) improvement, sustainability, and fulfillment of mission (CFRs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.6. 4.8). Accordingly, CSU Stanislaus should:

a. Clarify the respective responsibilities of the administration and the faculty in decision-making with a reciprocal appreciation for the necessary role of each (CFRs 3.8 and 3.11);

b. Commit to open, direct, and timely communication of essential information and data relevant to decision-making to deans, chairs, and faculty leadership (CFR 3.8);

c. Ensure fulfillment of educational effectiveness and institutional integrity by truthful representations of consequences of decision-making to students and the public (CFRs 1.7 and 1.8); and

d. Fill senior administrative positions as quickly and effectively as possible with qualified persons who share the University's academic values through consultative processes appropriate to institutional integrity and educational effectiveness, with a recognition of the delegated authority of defined roles, including but not limited to the provost (CFRs 3.8, 3.10).

The importance of acting on this recommendation in a timely and open manner cannot be overstated. In taking concrete steps to address these specific concerns, CSU Stanislaus should also be mindful of the importance of trust among the constituents who clearly share a commitment to the success of the University in serving its students and community. An atmosphere of trust enables different perspectives to be considered and final actions to be taken without rending the character, values and purpose (CFR 1.1) of CSU Stanislaus, which have been built deliberately, carefully, and patiently for over half a century.