

VISITING TEAM REPORT

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CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH

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California State University Long Beach

Founded in 1949, California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) has grown steadily to become a large comprehensive university within the California State University System. In 2001 the total student headcount was 33,259 with a total Full Time Equivalent (FTE) enrollment of 25,592 (an increase in nearly 2000 FTE increase from the previous year). Approximately 80 percent of the degrees granted are at the Bachelors level with the remaining 20 percent at the Masters level. In 2000, CSULB employed 1714 faculty members, of whom approximately half were full time yielding a FTE faculty of 1150.

CSULB has been accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges since 1957. Although conditions at the university in 1982 resulted in it being placed on Warning due to “tensions in university governance” this Warning was removed after reports were submitted over the next two years. The fifth year visit in 1986 resulted in the Commission asking for a report regarding fiscal control procedures. During their preparation for the last regular WASC visit in 1992, system and campus budgets were “in a state of freefall” as a direct consequence of statewide budget cuts. In the words of the current CSULB Self Study, “ the University simply could not pay for the faculty needed to teach the courses students wanted to take”. The result was a precipitous drop in enrollment. However, the process of conducting the self study in preparation for the 1992 visit made it clear that the university had much to gain by stabilizing its administrative processes and focusing on the creation of a high quality academic environment. While finding many commendable areas (including the library, and

development), the 1992 visiting team expressed concern about the general education program, faculty understanding of institutional expectations, and long term financial planning. The Fourth Year Report submitted in 1995 addressed all of the visiting team's concerns and received high praise from the WASC Senior Commission Executive Director for its "refreshing... candor". Despite this somewhat bumpy background, CSULB was among the first institutions to volunteer to conduct its Self Study and be evaluated under the new WASC Standards addressing core commitments to institutional capacity and educational effectiveness.

It was clear to the visiting team from the onset that the improvement in economic conditions and enrollment projections, the recruitment of a cadre of academically talented freshmen, and the development of an enthusiastic and collegial campus culture provided a considerably different context for the conduct of this self study and campus visit. Many of the individuals who served on committees and task forces conducting the current self-study had worked together on similar issues over the past two decades. It was obvious that many faculty, staff, and students had been involved in conversations and discussions related to the topics and themes selected for the self-study. The Self Study included sections reflecting CSULB's commitment to both institutional capacity and educational effectiveness.

Conduct of the Visit

month before the visit. During this call, team members shared their first impressions of the institution's Self Study. After the call, the team chair coordinated a general schedule with the campus liaison officer and support staff. Throughout the visit the institution was fully cooperative, extraordinarily hospitable and exceptionally candid in their interactions with all members of the visiting team.

A schedule of the visit is attached as Appendix 1. All members of the team were able to arrive by Monday evening to share a dinner and get acquainted informally before the official first meeting on Tuesday morning. At this meeting, the WASC staff member, provided a brief explanation of the philosophy underlying the new WASC accreditation standards and processes. It should be noted that the team was charged with the responsibility of conducting both an examination of CSULB's Institutional Capacity and its Educational Effectiveness during the visit. Normally these two activities would be conducted during two visits separated by approximately one year. The members were then asked to participate in an experiential learning activity designed to show the importance of communication and cooperation among team members. The campus liaison officer and WASC staff member also actively participated in this session. In the opinion of the chair, this exercise provided a useful framework for reminding everyone of the difficulty and complexity of the task ahead as well as providing useful reminders about the necessity of carefully listening to one another.

The next order of business was a conversation concerning the quality of evidence supporting CSULB general compliance with the four WASC standards and their institutional capacity. After arriving on campus late Tuesday morning, the team was taken for a whirlwind tour of portions of the campus by the president. His commitment

to the university as well as his extraordinarily positive relationships with students, faculty, and staff were clearly manifest by cheerful greetings and occasional “high fives” all along the route. After lunch together in the faculty dining room, various members of the team met with individuals to clarify questions concerning the WASC standards. That evening, after a festive reception and dinner, the team returned to the hotel and discussed how their first impressions reported that morning had been affected by their various visits across the campus during the day. Wednesday morning started with a meeting with the entire Self Study Steering Committee and then quickly broke up into smaller meetings between particular campus task forces and visiting team members assigned to the three focus areas of the CSULB Educational Effectiveness Report (viz., Enrollment Management, General Education, and Student Services). Open meetings for students, faculty and staff were conducted on Thursday afternoon by some team members while others continued to work together to probe the issues related to the three focal areas. Visiting team meetings were held each evening and members collectively sought to understand how their observations fit together. At the request of the team chair, little report writing was done during the visit. Late Thursday evening, the team reached consensus on the gist of the exit briefing to be provided to the president and subsequently to a large audience of students, faculty, and staff. A document containing the notes used for the concluding remarks was sent to all team members on the day following the visit. Team members had volunteered to write particular portions of the report on Friday morning and were asked to submit their drafts to the chair electronically within a week.

Institutional Capacity (WASC Standards)

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purpose and Ensuring Educational Objectives

***Institutional Purposes* - “The institution defines its purposes and establishes educational objectives aligned with its purposes and character.”**

CSULB provided the visiting team with a large array of printed materials and web-based documents that covered all aspects of the institution’s operations. The University’s mission statement describes its mission as offering a “high quality education leading toward a broad range of baccalaureate and graduate degrees spanning the liberal arts and sciences and many applied professional fields, in accordance with the California Master Plan for Higher Education.” This mission provides a useful framework for CSULB’s institutional purpose, identity, planning, and decision-making. From meetings with individuals representing a cross-section of the campus community, it was apparent that there is widespread engagement and support for the mission of the institution. However, there are some

However, there was less clarity as to how the University's mission was promoting a student-centered learning environment. The WASC team noted that the institution has promulgated six strategic priorities that relate to educational objectives. An integration of these priorities would afford the institution an opportunity to better articulate its goals in support of student-learning outcomes and, at the same time, provide the basis for ascertaining the level of achievement of educational objectives and student-related learning goals.

Integrity - "The institution functions with integrity and autonomy."

The University provided many materials that underscore its commitment to academic freedom in teaching, learning, research, publication, and oral presentation. There was clear evidence that due process procedures are in place to ensure the protection of privacy for all members of the academic community. For example, the team reviewed documents outlining policies on faculty and student rights and responsibilities, including the rights of due process and redress of grievances. We found all of the publications accurately and consistently represented the institution's policies and practices.

The WASC team found evidence that the University administration has effectively nurtured a *culture of collegiality* throughout the institution. The institution promotes a "philosophy of civility" at all levels. There was clear evidence of many cross-divisional/departmental functional teams, involving faculty, administrators and students, working effectively together on a wide-range of university-related issues.

On the basis of the information provided, and meetings with a variety of constituencies, the team concluded that the University functions with a high level of integrity within as well as in its relations with those outside the institution. This included

such functions as: administrative operations, University finances, human resources, the foundation, auxiliary enterprises, and the athletic department. This also includes the institution's relationship with the CSU Chancellor's Office.

California State University, Long Beach has a well-defined institutional identity that has pervasive recognition and support from students, staff and faculty. An exuberant spirit of collegiality and commitment is ubiquitous. The institution's commitment to increasing classroom quality and academic success is evident. However, the extent to which *higher learning* has been em

transformation and become a model university. All the groundwork seems to be in place.

What is missing in the opinion of the team is a clear understanding of and commitm

learning paradigm (e.g., Philosophy, Communications, History, and Political Science). However, these practices appear to be exceptions to the norm. Most other departments appear to rely upon approaches derived from traditional instructional paradigms or market-driven enrollment models.

CSULB's decentralized approach to governance has garnered high levels of trust and acceptance. However, structures that spread program, resource, and assessment responsibility over several councils and committees sometime lack coherence and impede consistent implementation of policies. No single body or person appeared to have the authority for integrating planning, programming, resource allocation, and assessment. Although many of the same people serve on the different councils and committees, the failure to unify and integrate assessment into existing decision-making procedures hinder the development of a culture of evidence. The strength of the current governance system is that it works well to maintain collegiality and the continuity of existing practices. It remains to be seen if it can support the implementation of an assessment program sufficiently rigorous to significantly enhance student learning across the campus.

For example, in an attempt to get assessment activities started, the Provost issued an "Assessment Call to Arms" in 1995. As a result, over the past few years, 43 internal assessment grants were awarded to initiate assessment programs designed to enhance student learning. These initial efforts are necessary to creating a culture of evidence, however, they are not sufficient. Only nine responses were received by the Provost in response to his request for one-page program progress reports last year. Of the nine reports received, only five mentioned student learning outcomes and none of them indicated an actual change in curriculum or pedagogy as a result of assessment activities.

In addition, although there is a seven-year academic program review cycle in place that affords an opportunity for embedding assessment into ongoing academic practice (and there are plans for doing so), no examples were found that indicated learning outcomes assessment was currently used as part of these reviews other than in those studies that were performed for external professional accreditation. Another indication of the institution's current lack of commitment to create a culture of evidence are assessment policies that consistently suggest, rather than require compliance.

The rate of institutional transformation seemed to be encumbered by the extent to which a relatively few members of the faculty and administration were called upon repeatedly to fill important positions on committees, councils and task forces. The team heard the phrase "reform fatigue" on several occasions. The lack of a common educational model (viz., the learning paradigm), failure to "close the loop" on some assessment initiatives, and the lack of a coherent assessment program serve to amplify the team's perception of the need for further progress in this area. A more fully integrated and coherent approach to institutional planning and assessment will help create efficiencies that will help the institution achieve its goals.

There was evidence to suggest that CSULB is attaining its educational objectives with respect to its objectives of teaching, scholarship and creative activity and support for student learning. Although it was not always apparent by what mechanism decisions were implemented or plans were realized, the broad support and collegiality has minimized barriers to implementation and faculty and staff resistance that characterize many other campuses. Once again, however, the lack of consensus on student learning

outcomes has created questions about the effectiveness of core functions as they apply to student learning and the institution's educational effectiveness.

**Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and
Organiz**

Program Review Process and then into the Department and College Level Planning and Resource Allocation Process.

Faculty and Staff: The document “Planning the Faculty and Academic Programs of the Future” developed by the Deans in October 1998 is an excellent initiative. The self-study raised a concern about tenure density and a relatively high reliance on temporary faculty. A review of data by college of tenure/tenure track, lecturers, and part-time faculty, revealed that the ratios vary considerably across the campus. Those with relatively fewer tenure/track faculty typically are those most involved in offering the General Education Foundations courses. This trend is not unusual in comprehensive universities nationally nor in the CSU system. As new faculty are hired it will become important to ensure their commitment to general education as well as their respective majors; this is particularly true in departments with a major involvement in GE. Discussions with part-time faculty revealed that for the most part they are integrated into their departments; however, some do not feel they are consulted about the general education curriculum as it is being “reformed.” This is a serious issue if the university continues to rely heavily on temporary part-time faculty to deliver many of the lower division GE courses.

There was evidence of student and peer review of faculty and sufficient faculty development activities (assessment grants, research support and travel). However, the faculty should consider how they might provide evidence that such faculty development activities enhance teaching effectiveness as demonstrated by increased student learning. Once again the need for a more wide spread conversation about and understanding of the

implications of a learning paradigm and the development of a culture of evidence would significantly enhance effectiveness in this area.

Fiscal, Physical and Information Resources: Documents provided to the visiting team and interviews on the campus indicate that the University is economically viable. As the University reaches its physical capacity, enrollment management is becoming an increased cause for concern. There is evidence that plans are underway to control enrollment by raising admission criteria for students outside the immediate Long Beach service area and through program “impaction”. However, current plans do not seem to be adequate to guide the university’s allocation of resources and assets once it reaches the “steady-state” condition it is so rapidly approaching. A plan needs to be in place for establishing priorities, and making resource allocations, if there will be no new resources coming to the university because enrollment has reached a plateau.

It also did not seem to the team that the University had fully considered how it might expand to accommodate more students. Although CSULB is moving toward year round operations, there did not seem to be a plan to offer an evening/weekend curriculum or to increase distance and distributed education offerings. As with many other campuses the utilization of academic space and other resources on Fridays appeared to be considerably limited. Discussions with the technology staff, suggested that student and faculty needs are being addressed and adequate support for educational processes is available. CSU’s decision to implement a Common Management System seems to be moving forward gradually and systematically.

California State University, Long Beach has developed organizational structures that are both creating and systematically applying available resources to ensure

sustainability. Although the alternatives available for managing these resources are constrained by rules of the CSU system, the team was impressed with CSULB personnel's willingness to m

conversation with team members. There is also evidence of an evolving understanding of the need for transformation in university-level documents such as those from the Mid-Range Planning Committee.

Transition does not happen evenly or smoothly across a large organization, and such inconsistent progress was clearly evident at CSULB. Examples of cultures of

toward a culture more consistently committed to learning and continuous improvement. Only a few programs have used the revised guidelines thus far, so the effectiveness of these guidelines is yet to be fully demonstrated. The program review by the Department of Philosophy was identified frequently by other faculty as an example of a review incorporating assessment of student learning in an effective way and, in the team's opinion, clearly demonstrates the strong potential of this approach.

Program review also provides examples of some of the difficulties CSULB is experiencing in its establishment of a culture of evidence. Discussions with various department chairs made clear to the visiting team that there are still many departments that do not yet see program review as a tool for improving student learning, rather than as a mechanism for asserting the resource and organizational needs of the department. The inconsistency across departments in their understanding of the goals of program review and what constitutes relevant evidence is no doubt partly due to the newness of the

department. Mechanisms for ensuring that decisions in the departmental trenches support the goals of the institution appear to be lacking.

The enrollment pressures the university is experiencing have undoubtedly diverted attention of many decision-makers from other university goals. Conversations with department chairs made clear that much decision-making is driven by the scramble to cope with the student numbers, leaving little time and limited resources for concerns such as retention or learning outcomes. There is eager anticipation of the time when enrollment management initiatives will control the growth—and, it is widely hoped, improve the academic preparation of the student body. But controlling growth will not guarantee that attention turns to these apparent university-wide goals. Only strong leadership across the campus can ensure the follow-through and accountability that will create a university-wide culture that focuses on student learning.

CSULB has conducted sustained and highly participatory discussions about its appropriate plans, policies and priorities. Senior leadership seems to be very open to inquiry and opinions from subordinate units. The only problem with the existing system is the general lack of norms that insist on evidence for claims and accountability for documenting the effects of programs on student learning. Although there is a refreshing willingness to share even sensitive information across the campus, there also seems to be a general reluctance for departments and divisions to ask tough questions that might provide evidence contrary to traditional assumptions or popular desires.

Conclusions Concerning Institutional Capacity

“The Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity enables the institution to consider resource issues from a holistic perspective, and to consider capacity as an attribute beyond minimum compliance and a review of assets. Looking at itself through a “lens” of institutional capacity enables the institution to reexamine what it is in terms of

its capacity to fulfill its aspirations, and to integrate and synthesize findings and recommendations for improvement gained through its self-review under Commission Standards... (it) allows an institution to explore cross-cutting issues such as whether resources, structures and processes are aligned with the institution's mission and priorities, and whether there is good evidence of effectiveness in their actual deployment. (WASC Handbook, p. 5)

California State University, Long Beach clearly has extraordinary institutional capacity and the potential to become a highly effective higher education institution. The level of goodwill across the campus was absolutely exemplary. Trust and acceptance of administrative decisions was ubiquitous and the caring and concern for the academic community expressed by senior administrators was sincere and impressive. As a result, CSULB has developed a strong sense of its own unique identity. The fact that so many students wore nearly exclusively clothing reflecting CSULB's logo and colors was just one indication of the high level of loyalty and satisfaction that was also consistently reflected by the visiting team's interviews with students, faculty and staff.

However, the team noted two areas that appeared repeatedly to be impeding the institution's progress toward realizing its potential. The first of these was the apparent lack of recognition of distinctions between teaching and learning paradigms (e.g., Barr, R.B. and Tagg, J, (1995) From Teaching to Learning – A new Paradigm for Undergraduate Education. *Change*, Nov/Dec, Vol 27, Issue 6). Much of the language contained in the new WASC standards (as well as the other regional accrediting agencies) is predicated upon an understanding and acceptance of the ascendancy of demonstrable student learning as the preeminent criterion for educational effectiveness. The second area of development necessary for CSULB to realize the full potential of its latent capacity is the development of a culture of evidence. The *WASC Evidence Guide*

ability to increase its use of data to inform its educational and institutional policies and programs.

It should be noted, however, that this is the first visit by a WASC accreditation team that attempts to actually apply the four standards in the new *WASC Handbook* in their entirety to an institution of higher education. CSULB began its self-study before the standards were published and also did not have the advantage of having a preliminary institutional capacity visit prior to undertaking its self-study. One cannot help but assume that if CSULB had been provided the critique provided above before conducting its own Self-Study, it would have been able to marshal its forces to effect substantive changes before the second team visit occurred. It is the visiting team's opinion that adopting a learning paradigm and developing a culture of evidence would have inevitably sharpened the focus and effectiveness of CSULB's Self Study.

Educational Effectiveness

Enrollment Management

Enrollment Management was one of the three themes CSULB chose for the focus of their self-study. The issue of the size of the student body and the plans by which the institution expects to both control enrollment and make decisions in the face of changing in enrollments is a critical issue for CSULB. WASC Standard 4.2 is most clearly related to this issue: did CSULB undertake a planning process that defines and then aligned academic, personnel, fiscal, physical and technological needs with the strategic objectives and priorities of the institution? In the main, the team concluded the standard was met though there are several aspects of the inquiry that require attention.

The basis for these conclusions stems from a reading of self-study materials and from numerous on-cam

This represented 32.5% of incremental state funds compared with \$71.3 million or 34.5% of the \$207.6 million total budget allocated to faculty resources. The 2% differential accommodates the lower average cost of incremental faculty compared to permanent faculty and the fact that some positions were filled after the start of the budget period. Thus the budget allocated new resources [based upon enrolling a higher number of new students] to instruction in proportion to the prior years' commitments of resources to instruction.

In spite of the fiscal benefits of additional enrollment, the overall enrollment management strategy is designed to deal with problems that have accrued from continuing increases in enrollment at CSULB in excess of the campus' capacity to deliver educational programs. For a variety of reasons, some intrinsic to CSULB and some a function of location and local economics and demographics, this campus has enjoyed several years of steadily rising demand.

The academic and administrative leadership on campus is convinced that the campus has reached capacity. The campus indicates that there are severe bottlenecks in teaching space, in faculty space on campus and student access to at least 10 programs (evidenced by increasing numbers of students denied program access and lengthening time to entry and or completion, of such programs). The enrollment management concern came to head with the enrollment of approximately 1300 more freshman than were planned in the fall of 2001. The consequences of this excess enrollment for a campus already stretched were dire: even longer program queues, classrooms at capacity in many programs and a need to rapidly increase teaching capacity. The President, on the basis of internal recommendation asked the CSU system for permission to invoke

enrollment caps via *impacted freshmen* admission status, as laid out in CSULB's steady state implementation plan. The major mechanism invoked in the plan is the installation of admission standards for freshman at CSULB that will be academically higher than the admission standards used at other CSU campuses. This response plan was reviewed and approved by the CSU Lreviewed and

the potential problem and are committed to closely monitoring the entering class profile to determine the effects, if any, that occur over time. Several options face the campus in the event the two-tier admissions system creates problematic distributions of student abilities.

Another planning consequence of the enrollment management strategy is that the campus will have to face and respond to continued pressure to seek maximum use of space and schedule. This pressure will come up against constraints endemic to campus' serving traditional college aged students, ms, m

making. In order for program reviews at CSULB to allow resource reallocation decisions to be based upon CSULB's declared intention to incorporate student learning into decision-making, their program reviews require re-tooling to shift the focus from an academic input/activity model to an output oriented, achieved student-learning model. Further, since new faculty lines will not likely accrue to the overall campus given the enrollment management strategy of capping enrollment through impactment, faculty lines that do open will need to be collected and redistributed to areas of greatest need. This approach is embedded in the RPP; however, the RPP appears to lack an explicit role for collecting and considering evidentiary information in general and for evidence of the effectiveness of programs with respect to student learning objectives, in particular.

The missing link in joining educational effectiveness to resource allocation is manifest by the separation of overall enrolment planning from program review and program reviews separation from planning for the filling of faculty lines. Neither program review, nor RPP show clear evidence of evaluation of educational effectiveness, successful attainment of learning objectives or any other measurement that would generate a probative basis for *non-enrollment driven* decision-making. Senior members of the faculty and administration attest that such non-enrollment, quality-based decisions are made, but the team was unable to verify that by independent observation.

The lack of linkage across planning, program review and faculty line allocations does not however, leave CSULB without tools to manage the consequences of excess demand for its programs. CSULB can invoke supplemental admissions standards to impacted programs and even though the CSU system restricts the rate of increase in the number of programs that can be declared as being impacted, it appears that there is

considerable room to expand the number of programs affected. CSULB can regulate the number of transfer students accepted by impacted programs; the campus can also increase or decrease the number of adjuncts/non-tenure track instructors in order to balance teaching loads. The faculty seem very capable of reviewing and improving curricula but the lack of systematic assessment poses a severe limitation on the development of adaptive strategies for what is likely to be a continuing challenge of managing enrollment to enhance student learning. While tools exist, there is a joint concern regarding future decision-making: 1.) will decisions be based upon actual measures of student learning and 2) will the current collegial decision making style be able to withstand the hard choices under more stringent steady state funding constraints.

CSULB has clearly selected a critical area to investigate during its self-study. It has effectively used available information concerning enrollment and entering student characteristics. It made a bold and courageous decision to limit growth in the interest of developing a stable, high quality, academic environment. However, consideration of the implications of the learning paradigm combined with the continued development of a culture of evidence would be likely to provide new insights and additional alternative tools.

General Education

The previous WASC visiting team found several serious shortcomings in the General Education (GE) program at CSULB: lack of a clearly articulated rationale; no assessment of the program's effect on student learning; and lack of evidence that the institution used assessment results to improve the program. In response to these concerns a thoughtful and broadly inclusive process began in 1994 with the creation of the Task

Force on Undergraduate Education, and gained momentum in 1995 with a “call to arms” by the Provost. The process has included intensive work on university committees to shape the process, involvement in the Asheville Institute for General Education (Association of American Colleges and Universities), AAHE’s Summer Institute and other external conferences and workshops, and internal meetings like the Winter and Summer Institutes (GEWI and GESI).

A compelling and useful conceptual model has emerged from these efforts. It contained three distinctly developmental stages. Students first select from a list of “Foundations” courses designed to help them learn essential communication, critical thinking, and quantitative skills. The next stage consists of “Exploration” courses, in which students learn to apply basic skills developed in the foundations courses within the context of a particular subject matter domain. The final stage consists of “Capstone” courses designed to help students integrate their skills in solving cross-disciplinary problems. A set of alternative “Pathways”

Much is praiseworthy, therefore, in CSULB's general education reform: it has a solid conceptual grounding, significant faculty participation, and an active and conscientious review committee. Further, the institution is blessed with a highly collegial culture and strong faculty leadership, which deters the "turf wars" and academic paralysis characteristic of many other campuses. Finally, faculty members enjoy significant latitude in creating courses eligible for certification. Significant challenges remain, however, all stemming from an absence of overall learning goals for general education--and thus a lack of consensus about what students should be *learning*--and insufficient attention to assessment of learning outcomes as a tool for curricular improvement. In short, while the institution is on the cusp of redefining its culture from an "instructional" to a "learner-centered" paradigm, it is not there yet, and will not be until it shifts its focus from what *courses should be teaching* to what *students should be learning*.

In 1996 a working group of faculty and administrators articulated four principles to guide subsequent discussion and the process of creating a GE program: 1) Distinction for CSULB, 2) Flexibility to change and improve over time, 3) Demonstrable student outcomes based on high standards, and 4) Coherence in the GE Curriculum. The evidence indicates that activities guided by Principle 1 have been successful; that plans are unfolding well in accord with Principle 2, although major challenges remain; that work relating to Principle 3 has only begun and needs significantly more emphasis; and that significant progress has been made, consistent with Principle 4.

1. *Distinction for CSULB.* The GE plan appears to be unique among the 23 schools in the California State University system. The three-stage model is conceptually sound and easily understood. If CSULB can continue on the trajectory it has begun for

not at the program level. And while the Committee expects “appropriate learning goals” and “consistent experiences for students,” the criteria to be used in making such judgments are not specified. What constitutes “good” learning outcomes at the course or program level? Examples of improvement driven by evidence of student learning and

(many are actively engaged in the university beyond their teaching and without any additional financial remuneration), they are still not permanent employees of the institution and have little formal responsibility beyond their individual classes. In brief, while plans are in place, no evidence was presented to support the claim of “coherence” as experienced by students. Furthermore, the university must work hard (as it clearly states it will) on the staffing plan to find the right balance between permanent and temporary faculty, particularly for those courses in the GE program.

The evolution of CSULB to a learner-centered institution that routinely collects data on student learning outcomes, engages in collective reflection about these data, and then acts to improve student learning must continue to unfold in a purposeful way. To date little evidence exists which would allow CSULB and/or the accreditation team to assess what and how much value the GE program adds to student learning, and how such evaluations would be conducted. The team was privy to a great deal of information, but the information was not integrated or holistic, nor did it seem to have been used to enhance interpretation and reflection in response to purposeful questions. It is clear what CSULB is doing in General Education and why it is doing it. The team is simply unable to address the question of how well it’s working due to the dearth of evidence of useful information.

Sustaining the needed transition to a learner-centered institution will require attention to a potentially serious problem. Several informants described “reform fatigue,” a sense of burnout from seemingly endless meetings. Reform has been championed by a relatively small number of faculty on campus, and new champions are needed, as well as broader participation of the faculty at large. This will be difficult given the complacency

that threatens to settle in during times of flush student enrollment. Those responsible for GE on campus would be well advised to take more advantage, as well, of the excellent support services on campus, including the Faculty Center for Professional Development, writing center, and the math center, as well as the office of Institutional Research, which (as is true on many campuses) is under-utilized by faculty addressing issues of student learning.

And finally, CSULB would profit from a mechanism to share “best practices” in documenting student learning. Despite more than 40 “assessment grants” given out during the past few years, the sharing of what was learned from these departmental projects has been quite limited. Reports on these projects are missing or incom

Services to Students

Services to Students was the last of the three central themes of CSULB's self-study. The attention given to student services in the 1992 WASC report and the obvious concerns raised within the institution subsequent to that visit required a thorough review. More importantly, the progress achieved here provides evidence of a new level of administrative and educational effectiveness. Perhaps most important the steps taken in reforming the provision of services to students provide a tangible example of the institution's ability to act decisively and positively in response to evidence.

The team was particularly impressed by the steps taken as a result of the recommendations made in 1995 by the President's Task Force on Services to Students. This task force chaired by the provost inaugurated its deliberations with a commitment - "to discover how and why our ideals of service are falling short" by asking the university to manifest the "courage to ask hard questions about itself." As a result of this bold undertaking 31 different service units were examined by consultants through various assessments, interviews, focus groups and follow-up studies. Following this initial review, nine units were selected for special attention. These included Academic Advising, Admissions, Cashiers/Financial Aid Disbursement, Financial Aid, Graduation and Evaluation Services, Library and Learning Resources, Records. Subsequent data from all of these units demonstrated significant improvement.

inability to utilize the flexible curricular design options and, perhaps most critical for CSULB's mission, the lack of access to occupational and career advising. The university's extremely high freshmen academic probation rate was also a significant problem. From 1991 through 1995 between 25% and 30% of all freshmen were placed on academic probation. During the same period the percentage of students from all classes on probation averaged less than 15%.

These data spawned several effective interventions. One of the more impressive and effective was the establishment of an advising council with representatives from all of the disparate units in student services and academic departments that provide advising to students. The efforts of the council resulted in a greater consistency in the quality of advising, in the uniformity of advising formats and more systematic cooperation across the university. Another innovation was to institute a program of mandatory advising for all freshmen, requiring them to receive advising before enrolling for the first year. Other changes included the formation of a first year experience committee to coordinate freshman curricular support and an enhanced program providing summer orientation and advising. The consequences of these changes are impressive. Beginning in 1996 the average rate of first year students placed on probation began a decline from the high of 30.9% in 1991 to 14.6% in 2000. The surveys completed by freshmen in the mandatory advising program also showed significant positive change in students' satisfaction. Two responses were particularly telling. During the first year of the mandatory advising program, 77.6% of freshmen reported that faculty and staff "make me feel like I belong here." That number had increased slightly to 81.5% of freshmen reporting that same sentiment in 2000, the fourth year of the program. More important, during that same time

period the number of freshmen answering, “yes, definitely” to the question “Do you plan on graduating from CSULB?” increased from 40% in 1997 to 61.4% in 2000.

Progress was achieved in financial aid services as well. Data reported by the President’s Task Force indicated that prior to implementation of the Task Force recommendations staff were overextended and frustrated by awkward procedures and apparently contradictory policies. This created great distress among students as well as considerable faculty frustration, as shown by 49% of faculty expressing the opinion that financial services were “below average.” These negative responses were addressed by instituting new programs of staff support, purchasing equipment to expedite services and ensuring more effective coordination of services. The results showed clear program improvement. In 1994 prior to the implementation of the Task Force recommendations, only 38.6% of students described financial aid services as “excellent” or “good.” In 1999, that number had increased to 63.3%; the most significant improvement in reported student satisfaction among any of the student services surveyed.

Several other sources of evidence were employed to assess the quality of services delivered to students. The Vice President for Student Services has imhas im

accreditation by their respective professional organizations. Moreover all of the Student Services units engage in routine program review procedures. Although not all of these program reviews had been completed at the time of the team's visit, those that were available showed a thorough assessment of strengths and weaknesses with thoughtful recommendations for sustained improvement. The result of these surveys and more formal assessments were corroborated by focus groups with students from a wide variety of subcultures across the campus to provide confirming information.

The reality of the emergence of this culture of evidence was confirmed by the visiting team in the variety of conversations conducted across the campus. In scheduled open sessions with students, conferences with faculty and spontaneously scheduled visits to classes of both freshm

- 1) The survey of student needs and priorities is not administered with sufficient frequency to provide timely information about current issues that concern students. More frequent student satisfaction surveys, perhaps every other year, would more quickly identify issues of significant concern to students.
- 2) The mid-range goals provided to the team in explication of the Resource Planning Process did not contain goals directly related to student services. In view of anticipated competition for scarce budgetary resources it is important to sustain the commitment to effective student services. Therefore the team recommends that concrete goals should be established.
- 3) While the university is making good efforts to recruit and retain a diverse student body, members of the team were somewhat concerned about the limited space made available to staff and student employees in the educational equity and outreach departments. Clearly the efforts of a dedicated staff are hampered by what seemed to be very cramped quarters. In a time of scarce resources and growing minority student enrollment, it is important that steps be taken to provide adequate support to this important department of student services.

Conclusions Concerning Educational Effectiveness

“The Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness provides an opportunity for the institution to explore holistically its approaches to educational effectiveness and assess whether institutional systems, such as course and program design, faculty support, and program review are effectively linked to evidence of student learning and are consistent with educational goals and academic standards of the institution.” (WASC Handbook, p. 6)

California State University Long Beach used the self-study to explore three issues that were very relevant and involved a broad segment of the campus population.

Enrollment management was of interest because external “market conditions” had shifted

and the school would be moving into a new set of circumstances where continued growth would no longer be feasible even if it might be physically possible. General Education was an area of concern among many members of the faculty; developing a strong General Education curriculum was entirely consistent with the increasing emphasis CSULB is placing on its own niche within the CSU System and its identity as a “school of choice” for top students and scholars. This was also an area that had been identified as needing improvement in the previous WASC visit. Similarly, services to students had been a cause for concern for many faculty and staff and CSULB students as well as the previous WASC visiting team.

The CSULB Self Study was undertaken before the publication of new accreditation standards and without the benefit of a formal institutional capacity visit as now prescribed in the WASC 2001 Handbook of Accreditation. However, all three studies appear to have nonetheless added value to the institution by providing useful insights, developing new structures, providing strategic and policy alternatives, and a bevy of reasonable recommendations worthy of further consideration. This raises the question of how the suggestions contained in the review of institutional capacity might have added value to the study of educational effectiveness? The answer is different for each of the three areas.

The Self Study’s approach to the question of Services to Students was excellent. Signs of a rapidly emerging culture of evidence were to be found at every turn. As the team report suggests, the progress made in this area could serve as a model for other departments and divisions on campus as well as Academic Services organizations at other campuses (including those at private as well as state institutions). This is not to say that

accountability for documenting the learning outcomes it is designed to produce. On the one hand, the strong culture of collegiality and civility has generated numerous benefits for the campus. However, strengths can become weaknesses when they are overdone. Most faculty and staff were very appreciative of the highly decentralized approach adopted by the president and senior administrators. However, most of these individuals also readily admitted that the only real progress that had been made on campus in the assessment of learning outcomes was to be found in programs where outside accreditors insisted on the use of evidence to support assertions concerning compliance with standards. It is the team's opinion that vigorous efforts to develop an internally anchored culture of evidence will significantly contribute to the attainment of the goals set for the general education program.

Enrollment management was the final area of inquiry in CSULB's Self Study. The team appreciates the institution's consciously deciding to eschew continued growth and increased funding to focus on maximizing the quality of campus academic life. Similarly, the high level of coordination both among campus constituencies and with the CSU office is commendable. Information appeared to be analyzed and applied to forecasting the effects of alternative policies. However, this is a place where the implications of adopting a learning paradigm might have very significant effects. In a steady state environment the only new resources available are likely to be those that can be reclaimed from existing programs. In such an environment it becomes increasingly important to consider differences in the effects of programs on student learning. If no direct measures of learning are considered as part of the enrollment management decisions, then CSULB runs the risk of becoming sim

programs competing for resources by simply trying to raise enrollments (perhaps by lowering standards and relaxing academ

Attachment 2: WASC EXIT BRIEF – CSULB – Feb 4-8, 2002

Context: First WASC visit using new 2001 Handbook and Standards exclusively. Combined Institutional Capacity visit and Educational Effectiveness visit (normally there would have been a year between the two visits).

Standard 1: *Purpose* (Hiram)

- + diversity (especially wrt disabilities); strong sense of institutional identity
- lack of integration of goals for student learning into mission/purpose

Standard 2: *Process Effectiveness* (Tony)

- + services to students; great improvement over past 7 years (Blue Ribbon Task Force); exemplar of “closing the loop”; achieving results
- application of effective processes to educational effectiveness (several islands of excellence: History, Philosophy and Political Science)/ 43 assessment grants, 9 responses to VPAA request for reports, 5 mentioned learning outcomes, 0 indicated change to curriculum or pedagogy.

Standard 3: *Planning* (Cecilia)

- + decentralization has helped create high level of collegiality, consensus and acceptance, high level of participation: “CSULB epitomizes shared governance”
- lacking a “culture of evidence” especially with respect to student learning

Standard 4: *Continuous Quality Improvement* (John)

- + Unfreezing of old bureaucratic paradigms; VPAA “call to arms” in General Education 1995 indicated clear will to effect educational reform
- +/- Program Performance Review
 - + inside-out approach
 - lack of necessary top-down guidance for comparison/integration with other assessment efforts
- frequent lack of follow-through and accountability

Institutional Capacity (Dave P)

Strengths: exceptional level of goodwill, trust and acceptance of administrative decisions; genuine caring and concern for welfare of community constituencies; strong sense of identity; institutional transformation has clearly begun; extraordinary potential

Opportunities for Improvement: 1) recognition of distinctions between teaching and learning paradigms (Barr and Tagg) and consideration of learning perspective in decisions and 2) lack of development of a culture of evidence (WASC Evidence Guide) has led to limited accountability and follow through.

Normally this information would have been provided prior to the CSULB initiating their Self-Study. The team believes that this information would have enhanced the focus and direction of CSULB’s inquiry significantly.

CSULB's Focal Functions (Self Study)

B. *Enrollment Management* (Phil)

+ recognize challenges and made bold, timely and decisive commitment to sustain maximum quality of academic life for students, faculty and staff by capping growth; using enrollment management tools skillfully; excellent coordination with CSU System Office.

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