CAPACITY AND PREPARATORY REVIEW REPORT
OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM TO
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY CHICO

March 7 – 9, 2007

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 according to Commission Standards and the Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity and therefore submits this Report to the institution for consideration and to the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for action.
I. Introduction

California State University, Chico, whose origins date to 1887, is part of the 23-institution California State University System. As noted in previous accreditation visit summaries, the University occupies a scenic 119 acre campus that is immediately adjacent to downtown Chico. The close proximity between the campus and the business core of the city provides a wonderful college-town atmosphere, and the close town-gown relationship is an important part of the “Chico Experience”. The University has a Fall 2006 headcount enrollment of 14,826 undergraduates and 1,043 graduate students; 381 students are pursuing a teaching credential. The faculty ranks in academic year 2005-06 included 467 tenured or tenure-track faculty FTE, and 219 Lecturer FTE.

The accreditation status of the University was last affirmed by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges in 1996. The Commission action letter urged the University to “… take hold of its destiny, rather than rely on external forces to determine the University’s future. The University’s vision statement and the strategic plan define future directions, but successful implementation will be determined only by campus constituencies working together with the conviction that the University can and must construct is own future”. As noted below, the present team remains impressed with the goals of the strategic plan, but feels that it must include more explicitly articulated benchmarks and assigned responsibilities for the campus community to be most effectively spurred to action.

The visiting team convened in Chico on the evening of March 6, 2007, and spent the following two days in an intensive series of meetings with the administration, faculty,
staff, and students of CSU Chico. The visit was concluded on March 9, 2007 when team Chair Donald Farish orally summarized the preliminary findings during a team meeting with President Zingg and other campus administrators. The visit was organized to permit assessment of the University’s capacity in five areas, which generally correspond to the priorities within the Chico State strategic plan as well as the essays within the Capacity and Preparatory Review report:

- High Quality Learning Environments: Academic Programs, Faculty and Staff Resources, and Assessment of Student Learning
- High Quality Learning Environments: Superior Support Systems for Students
- Learning-Enabling Resources, Integrated Technology, and Information Management Systems
- Serving the Needs of the North State: Community & Regional Programs and Partnerships
- Strategic Planning, Resource, and Data Alignment: Towards Institutional Effectiveness & Accountability

A. Clarity of Institutional Purposes and Educational Objectives: Standard 1 requires that “The Institution… has a clear and conscious sense of its essential values and character, its distinctive elements, its place in the higher education community, and its relationship to society at large.”

1. The Chico Experience: CSU Chico has many notable institutional strengths. Certainly one of these is a remarkably clear and widespread view that the University has a unique and much beloved character that enhances the experience of all members of the campus community. This perspective, known as “The Chico Experience”, was
eagerly affirmed by all groups that met with the team, and was also clearly expressed in *ad hoc* interactions with individuals in the community encountered by team members. Traits that were frequently mentioned when discussing the Chico Experience were the residential character of the university, the friendly climate on the campus, exceptional levels of faculty accessibility and interaction with the students, the community service ethos within the University, and the pride taken in contributions to the community and the environment. Although the team certainly recognized the significance and reality of the Chico Experience in the character and quality of the University, there did not seem to be a sufficient consensus definition of what the community understood that experience to entail. This is one important example where the University does not document and gather data on some of its most important successes, and therefore is not in the best possible position for telling its story. The team recommends that the university consider enhancing its efforts to articulate best practices in a way that can be monitored, assessed, and readily communicated, so that they may be better promulgated across the campus on a large scale.

CSU Chico has an outstanding commitment to civic engagement, service learning and internship programs. This is reflected in NSSE data, which shows that Chico students are significantly more likely to have participated in community service or volunteer work than students in comparison institutions. The team heard repeatedly during the visit about the popularity and value of such programs among Chico students, faculty, and staff. The number of student-led programs and activities at CSU Chico is also extraordinary, and provides students with an opportunity for practical, community service learning.
In essence, CSU Chico already has the characteristics of a very large and successful learning community. This provides a unique and very strong foundation to build well-developed first year learning community programs that leverage all that the community loves about the Chico Experience. The team recommends that the campus invest in this opportunity by carefully articulating the aspects of the Chico Experience that enhance student affinity for the community and that support academic success. It is further recommended that this investment include commitment of resources for faculty development, and for professional staff in Student Life and Advising.

2. **Strategic Plan:** The remarkably strong sense of identity at Chico (CFR 1.1) is reflected in its strategic plan that is largely long-standing, but which was carefully re-considered and revamped following the arrival of President Zingg. The team found that the plan was well known to the members of the Chico Community (CFR 1.2). Faculty, professional staff, and administrators understand that new initiatives, particularly those that require resource allocation, need to be aligned with the priorities of the strategic plan. In most departments faculty must address the strategic plan in the RTP (retention, tenure, promotion) process. Decanal review and accountability is also organized around the 6 goals of the Strategic Plan (CFR 1.3), as follows:

1. High quality learning environments, inside and outside of the classroom.
2. Faculty and staff development to promote student success
3. Instructional Technology
4. Serve the North State
5. Diversify Sources of Revenue
6. Sustainability
The team heard from faculty, staff, and administrators that a consultative process was used in establishing these goals. The team felt that the issues identified for focus within the strategic plan were reflective of Chico’s distinctive character, and appropriate for a learner-centered institution. However, there was concern that assessment is hampered by failure to thoughtfully articulate specific desired outcomes for each of the goals.

3. **Diversity:** The previous team report expressed significant concern with the climate for under-represented minority students at Chico. During the present visit, the team learned from several sources that the campus commitment to diversity has benefited from the leadership of President Zingg (CFR 1.5). The President committed significant resources to recruitment efforts focused on diverse communities in Southern California and the Bay Area. Additionally, for the first time a campus diversity coordinator has been hired. Perhaps most importantly, President Zingg has made a sincere and effective effort to create greater urgency in campus efforts to enhance diversity. People on the campus recognize this, and have been spurred to “find a way”. There has been some improvement in the enrollment of African-American students, and many commented that the increase was both noticeable and welcome. Additionally, there have been some exemplar programs that have had success in enhancing diversity.

- The Diversity Scorecard Committee has coordinated campus wide efforts to increase access and success for under-represented minority students, and is carefully assessing the effectiveness of such efforts.
- The College of Business has a 10% higher retention rate for African-American students than does the campus as a whole. Their approach is to intentionally
create a welcoming climate, and enable under-represented minority students to affirmatively answer the question “do I belong here?” Business has also sponsored partnerships with an HBCU (historically black college or university) institution to enhance diversity for its students.

- The MESA program in Engineering has $1,000,000 of NSF funding for scholarships for under-represented students. Additionally, Engineering students have made trips to help re-build New Orleans, and to build a sanitary treatment plant in Honduras.

- The EOP program has a first year retention rate of 82%, which is comparable to the overall campus rate.

Despite these wonderful efforts, and a clear improvement from the situation that was documented at the time of the last reaccreditation review, some troubling issues remain. There are still significant concerns about the climate in the community, though there is now less concern about the campus climate for minority students. One student said, “the school is okay, but you leave campus and you don’t feel safe”. There is also concern about climate among faculty and staff of color, and their retention is also an issue. The team commends the progress that has been made regarding this very important issue. The team recommends that the campus consider articulating these positive developments in recruitment of under-represented minority students as a critical advantage for all of Chico’s students. The opportunity to interact with people from various backgrounds is intrinsic to a high quality university experience. This enables all students to be exposed to a variety of perspectives, opinions, and cultures, and thus be more prepared for success in an increasingly diverse society and globalized world.
B. Responsiveness of the Institutional Presentation to the Original Proposal

The institutional presentation did follow the plan as outlined in the CSU Chico proposal for reaffirmation of accreditation. However, the team was concerned with the device of using numerous marginal references to WASC’s Criteria for Review (CFR) throughout each of the reflective essays. The team felt that this approach was not sufficient to clarify where the campus stands with respect to the standards. We request that reference to relevant CFR’s should be more embedded within the text of the educational effectiveness report, with more specific and detailed explanation of how campus efforts address the various WASC standards.

II. Thematic Areas

A. High Quality Learning Environments: Academic Programs, Faculty and Staff Resources, and Assessment of Student Learning

1. Academic Programs: The team met with faculty members from 6 majors (Biological Sciences, Communication Studies, History, Business Information Systems, Agriculture, and Economics), as well as the Graduate Council, General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC) and the First Year Experience (FYE) coordinating group. Both General Education and FYE programs will be subjects of focus in the Educational Effectiveness review.

   FYE consists of two major components. Course Link represents a clustered enrollment approach, where students are block enrolled together in several courses in order to foster community and peer interactions in studying and course assignments. The program has been run for 10-12 years, and assessed several times during that period. The team was told that there were modest improvements in retention, GPA, and
graduation rate for students who participated in Course Link. A more elaborate pilot is scheduled for next year, which will incorporate faculty collaborating across disciplines; civic engagement focus; a residential hall component, including a coordinator working with participating students within their living environment; and peer mentors. The team was notified that assessment of this pilot approach should be available for the Educational Effectiveness review. The other major component of FYE is University 101, an introduction to university study seminar that reaches approximately 25% of entering freshmen. Assessment of the effectiveness of University 101 was not discussed, but again, the team was informed that this is intended to be part of the Educational Effectiveness review. FYE has many other components, which are distributed across the campus; these are being coordinated and just now assessed centrally for the first time. Assessment of these programs should also be available during the EE visit two years from now. These assessments will of course be crucial to provide the appropriate evidence for the effectiveness of the FYE programs, which are central in campus efforts to improvement of retention and academic success. An assessment of the effectiveness of the FYE programs in improving retention of under-represented minority students would be particularly welcome.

General Education is distinguished by the establishment of “thematics”, which are groupings of 3 upper division courses that provide coherence in GE offerings. Several courses were intentionally developed to be part of a theme, and not simply chosen from existing, “off the shelf” catalog offerings. GE review is a continuous process carried out on a cycle of Area A and B, followed by Area C, Area D and Cultural Diversity courses, Area E, Upper Division Themes, and completed by an overall program review. In this process, each individual GE course must be specifically
recommended for continuation to maintain its place within GE. This procedure sounds quite encouraging, though the team was not provided specific information regarding the evidence used for such assessments, and did not review this important process in detail during the CPR visit. The team anticipates a careful, evidence-based analysis of the effectiveness of the GE program as a component of the EE review, due to its intended role as a major point of focus, and its importance in meeting goals embedded in several CFR's.

Exemplar majors that were visited included Biology, History, Agriculture and Business Information Systems. Economics, and Communication Studies, and assessment programs in several of these programs are described immediately below.

Biology has made commendable progress on assessment, particularly on embedding assessment into individual course design. This has been a new emphasis over the last 3 to 4 years. During this time, the Biology faculty has formalized expectations for programmatic learning outcomes. The curriculum is now designed so that initial courses provide introduction, second tier courses provide deeper engagement, and capstone experiences provide mastery opportunities. Freshmen are routinely assessed regarding their self-evaluation about what they are learning. Within courses, WebCT survey tools and quizzes are used to learn about students. The feedback is used by the faculty to make adjustments as students move through the curriculum, and they also gather information on why students leave. The faculty is now quite committed to using assessment to improve teaching and learning. They express concern with the lack of resources necessary to purchase the equipment and instrumentation required to train scientists.
History completed an exceptional program review process that the faculty believes has strengthened the department. A new chair provided leadership that included: revision of mission statement; faculty defined and proposed student learning outcomes; and completion of an initial holistic assessment plan for learning outcomes. The History faculty acknowledges the importance of assistance and 'coaching' from the All University Responsibility for Assessment (AURA) committee in this process, which represents an important demonstration of the impact that campus investment in AURA has had. Members of the History department also identified several ongoing challenges. In particular, the budget reduction has led to loss of faculty through retirement, resulting in increased class size and increased demands on faculty. The faculty also expressed concern that this could portend a potential change in the character of institution.

The team learned that Agriculture has also made progress with its assessment program. The Agriculture faculty began development of their assessment program in Fall 05, which had its first use in Spring 06. The faculty have developed a series of student learning objectives, and are working on embedded assessment for each student learning outcome. They are also using exit surveys and employer information from their Advisory Board. They have developed goals and learner outcomes for the college, and have a detailed assessment plan with a timeline for full implementation (five goals and a completion of one goal per semester, with a completion date of Spring 08). They have a matrix of all their courses, with student learning outcomes (SLOs) assigned to each course in the form of "introduce," "practice," and "master" for each course. They have developed both oral and written communication rubrics, linked to a series of learning
outcomes, and indicated as "advanced," "proficient," or "unacceptable" for each. These rubrics are distributed to students who are asked to evaluate their own work before submitting it. In Spring 06 they initiated a process of providing annual reports on their progress to AURA. The Agriculture Faculty have also prepared a Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) poster that shows their learning outcomes, and indicates the percentage of students achieving each SLO.

Business Information Systems (BIS) began piloting its assessment system in 2003-04 and the faculty has made some changes as a result (CFR 2.7). Using a writing rubric BIS found that its students were not, as a group, at desired levels of proficiency in punctuation and grammar. Significant steps to address this issue included the hiring of a writing tutor, faculty grading of assignments for writing as well as content, and the addition of graded writing assignments to accounting classes. Remediation of Excel skills was also implemented. Improvements were also made in uniformity of coverage between sections, so faculty have a better understanding of what students know when they finish one course and go into another. BIS has cultivated a strong connection to industry. Industry advisory boards are used to give feedback on curriculum and on the Chico State BIS graduates they employ. BIS has been tracking their graduates since 1997 and their job placement rate is nearly 100%. Alumni often return to talk with current students and most of the companies on their advisory board hire their graduates. BIS also proactively seeks data on employee satisfaction with their alumni. For instance, Chevron provided data demonstrating that Chico State alumni had the highest employee retention rates, which Chevron believes is a reflection of the excellent preparation that BIS students receive for working in industry. As part of their
commitment to preparing students for employment, BIS has made industry experience a requirement for faculty hires.

2. *Faculty and Staff Resources:* Faculty and staff resources appear to be strained by CSU system issues and the national demographic trend of an aging faculty and administration. There appears to be significant faculty concern regarding delayed replacement of faculty positions, as well as some concern regarding difficulty in successfully completing searches. Additionally, many noted concern that these trends as well as enrollment trends may impact student learning, as well as the quality and variety of academic programs. A shift to more freshmen and fewer transfer students, puts even greater pressure on introductory and remedial courses. Faculty are more strongly drawn to teach GE courses, since the large enrollments generate more FTE credit for faculty hires.

The team did learn about several recent developments and initiatives that provide support for faculty, and to some extent mitigate concerns. There are 49 faculty searches are going on this year and 41 faculty hires were completed last year, of whom 19% were minority and 54% women. Many departments now give new faculty members a 3 course per semester teaching load. Additionally, Sponsored Projects provides seminars that provide guidance to faculty in submitting grant proposals. Another approach is to pair senior and junior faculty members to give them an opportunity for writing grants, with both getting a reduced 3/3 teaching load.

Serious budget cuts within the last three years also resulted in deep cuts in staff development opportunities that are only now rebounding. Both supervisory training and personal development workshops are coordinated by a staff committee, which seeks
input from across the campus. The committee works with appropriate departments to offer the training. A computer-based tracking system is under development, which will store records of staff member participation in training programs.

Despite the growing opportunities for training, staff expressed concern that professional advancement opportunities were quite limited. While frustration about this situation was expressed, most recognize that they have chosen to remain at Chico State rather than trade a friendly, personal, community environment for job promotion elsewhere. The consequence, they point out, is long-term, highly skilled people who turn to each other for assistance when tackling something new and who feel that they can depend on each other for knowledge and assistance.

This personal environment and supportive behavior is extended to students as well. Staff members are quite proud of their role in supporting students and helping to foster their personal growth and maturity. Numerous people commented on the personal touch students receive, as exemplified in comments such as “they never get a voice mail,” or “they know they can come and talk about relationship break-ups or parental problems.

3. **Program Assessment**: Evidence of the degree to which program assessment and learning outcomes assessment is taking place is inconsistent. Despite some positive developments, such as the establishment of the AURA (All University Responsibility for Assessment) committee, team members were generally still concerned about the lack of widespread progress on analysis and interpretation of data, and the lack of evidence that data are routinely used for programmatic improvement (CFR 2.4 and 2.7). The team was concerned with frequent lack of specificity for setting goals, which would help
focus efforts in assessment and data analysis (CFR 4.3). As described above, some exemplar programs had well-developed assessment systems and could provide examples of how they had used assessment results to make programmatic improvements. A matrix provided by AURA during the team visit was intended to document individual program progress in development of a mission statement, programs goals, student learning outcomes, a course alignment matrix, an assessment plan and assessment results. The team looks forward to reviewing additional documentation and evidence for the implementation of this assessment matrix during the EE review.

Faculty members expressed appreciation for AURA’s role in coaching, teaching, and support, and the group’s influence and recognition appears to be growing on the campus. Graduate programs are only at the very beginning stages of assessment, developing learning goals and struggling with how this is done and what it means. However, AURA focuses on undergraduate programs and the committee is not really involved with graduate program assessment. They may be able to be helpful in this regard, but as they become more widely recognized and their assistance sought, the university should be mindful of their ability to handle the load. Necessary resources to support a broad-based, ongoing commitment to assessment are required.

The Program Review process, largely focused on undergraduate programs, is being revised in phases with modest changes to the process being made at each stage as programs go through the process and provide feedback about what is working and what is not (CFR 2.7). The revised process is designed to incorporate program and learning outcomes data and to correspond with WASC standards, campus strategic
planning priorities, and CSU system priorities. The team found, however, that graduate programs have barely begun using data to review their programs. There was also some concern as to whether sufficient resources would be available to address programmatic issues identified in the review process. The team looks forward to hearing about additional progress in graduate level program review and assessment at the time of the Educational Effectiveness Review.

B. High Quality Learning Environments: Superior Support Systems for Students

"Chico is committed to maintaining superior support systems that promote student engagement and student success." There is no doubt that a strong, collaborative, and experienced staff is committed to providing superior support systems that promote engagement and student success for the 'whole' student at Chico. The 1996 WASC team spent time exploring the notion of a 'residential campus'. The staff and students participating in the 2007 visit clearly articulated the definition of a residential campus community. This definition is a unique aspect of the Chico experience: first year students primarily live on campus and the majority of the full-time students live within a two-mile radius of the campus.

Students spoke passionately regarding relationships with faculty and staff that they interact with on campus and within the community. A specific example cited and affirmed in the open student meeting was that students felt that faculty and staff were in a better position to offer support and provide letters of recommendation because they truly know students. Students feel strongly about their role as active citizens within the Chico community and are proud of their service and their role in turning around the 'image' of student behavior within the community.
New leadership within Student Affairs is committed to implementing a plan for assessment and learning outcomes in the Division that is consistent with best practices, congruent with Chico’s strategic plan, and which specifically addresses WASC Standard 2. Examples of superior support systems provided for the whole student at Chico include staff in areas such as: on-campus housing; student academic support; student mental health and well being; student experience; and capstone student experiences.

1. **Superior Support Services**: Chico maintains a priority that first year students live on campus. The on-campus housing program is a vibrant program supporting first year student success and providing opportunities for student leadership through staffing and student organization involvement. Student staff retention is high, interest in the staffing is significantly greater than available positions and the department has achieved its priority of increasing the diversity of student and professional staff.

Students are involved in significant leadership and peer education roles in meeting the ‘hierarchy of needs’ of their peers. The Associated Students manage on-campus dining and bookstore operations and support a large-scale outdoor recreation program. Students are the backbone of custodial support in the residence halls. In addition, students were often cited in peer teaching, tutoring, and peer-mentoring roles in student support areas. Students spoke eloquently of the staff that provided the training and support for these various roles. One student described staff mentors as individuals that helped her ‘write her story’.

A strong web of support offices exists to assist students, including at-risk students, to succeed. The Director of the Business Resource Center summed up the responsibility of the academic support offices as the 3 R’s: relationship (offices are
involved in relationships with prospective students prior to college); recruitment; and retention. Academic support offices in Business, Engineering (MESA), Alliance for Minority Participation, Educational Opportunity Program, Student Learning Center, Academic Advising, and Instructionally Related Activities spoke of long standing collaborative relationship as critical to their success and tracking of students. The staff in this area cited the President's support of diversity initiatives as instrumental in not only the increase of diverse students but in their ability to provide support.

Students proudly speak of the over 200 student organizations and their opportunities to create organizations where one had not existed before. Chico is to be commended for work in service and civic engagement. Chico is successfully working to increase student's global opportunities both on campus and through study abroad programs. For example, 350 students studied abroad in 23 countries during 2005-06, representing 10% of Chico graduates.

Chico’s support of the whole student is evident through the work of staff supporting student mental health and physical well-being. Students in the open session cited the exceptional support provided through the Office of Disability Support Services. One student spoke of her experience on multiple campuses, and that there was no comparison to the support she received at Chico. Health Service, Counseling Center, and Wellness Center staff spoke of strong linkages between staff collaborating to treat the whole student and of aggressively marketing their services to students. Staff are cognizant of their role is teaching students life long skills regarding their health and their relationship with their health care providers.
Chico is to be commended for its work in the challenging task of Alcohol Education. All new students are required to take the on-line assessment, AlcoholEdu. The data clearly indicate an increase in students' awareness and their care-taking behavior of their peers. Staff members in multiple areas collaboratively work on this issue openly, creatively, and aggressively.

Chico students take great pride in their ability to work in teams and stated that this is a factor that distinguishes them in the job market. Campus recruiters validated this point. Three on-campus recruiters cited the range of student involvement and preparation of Chico students to work in teams among the key reasons for their continued recruitment and successful hiring of Chico students. Alumni are engaged in the recruiting and mentoring of students.

Career Planning and Placement staff actively partner with students and faculty to prepare students (and alumni) for the job market. Chico student satisfaction with their job search support exceeds that of the other CSU campuses. The Center provides extensive and comprehensive services to students from all majors in variety of formats serving multiple learning styles.

2. Challenges: There is no doubt that the Student Affairs has demonstrated the capacity to move to the next level. The strength is the living mission of the Chico experience. The challenge for the staff is clearly in defining the meaning of the experience beyond verbally telling the story. It was a challenge to pull data – even where data exist to validate the story. The longevity of the staff is a strength and a challenge. A potential challenge exists in the succession of staff within a relationship and personality based culture.
Students spoke of challenges within the support infrastructure that could be resolved through articulating processes. Specific examples were questions regarding advising and resolving financial issues.

The demand for on-campus housing exceeds the availability of housing for first year students and on-campus housing is nearly non-existent for returning students. The staff has a fair concern regarding the placement of first year students in off campus housing spaces. It is a priority for the department to develop a deferred maintenance plan including a refresh of furniture in the current facilities.

The current First Year Experience Program is independent of the housing program, though relationships are cultivated by arranging for both the Director and the Associate Director of Housing to serve on the FYE Committee. The residential nature of the Chico experience offers a truly unique opportunity to establish residential learning communities – with course linkages within the residential communities. Formalizing the relationship between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs would provide a truly distinctive residential learning community. While theme housing exists, there is not a formal and/or seamless linkage between the curricular and co-curricular.

3. **Recommendations:**

- Student Affairs needs to fully engage in comprehensive program review process involving assessment and development of outcomes specific to the strategic plan.
- It would be helpful to send Student Affairs staff to WASC workshops in order that they might increase their understanding of WASC standards and their relationship to the Student Affairs area.
- Give consideration to involving faculty on Student Affairs program review teams.
• Formalize the relationship with Academic Affairs with respect to the First Year Experience and Orientation program (both student and parent program)

• Develop a long-range deferred maintenance plan and refresh plan for the residence halls

• Develop a housing master plan compatible with the university’s enrollment plan that would provide the availability of housing for first year students and increase the availability of on campus housing for returning students

• Carefully articulate in writing the systems that have developed based on long-term relationships. These need to become formally embedded in regularized campus organization and processes.

• Give thought to succession planning for long term staff and providing a system to ‘capture’ information currently retaining/maintained by long term staff

C. Learning Enabling Resources, Integrated Technology, Information Management Systems, and Off Campus Programs

The WASC Commission’s reaccreditation letter to CSU Chico (June 27, 1996) encouraged the University “... to use technology as a distinctive element of a CSU Chico education. This has implications for not only off-campus students served through distance learning methods, but especially for on-campus students. There are significant demands to be met to accomplish this goal.... Faculty and staff will need to be learners and innovators, and technology costs are substantial. The Commission shares the concern of the evaluation team that technology itself not be the primary goal but... that improvement of learning be the organizing basis for the technology distinction. Thus, it will be important to address how information literacy becomes a part of the learning
experience, as well as technological literacy, and the connection of technology to the learning goals of the University."

The CPR Report and the visiting team’s experience provide substantial evidence that CSU Chico has taken these suggestions seriously and achieved many successes in the integration of technology into the academic life. In addition, information technology is helping to provide more effective linkages between academic and other administrative functions on campus, and between the campus and its principal offsite location in Redding. (CFR 3.7)

Information Resources’ 2005-2006 Performance Report enumerates Information Resources activities in the framework of the campus Strategic Priorities. In addition, the report describes allocation of one-time Provost Funds, and offers performance indicators applicable both to CSU information requirements and CSU Chico’s IT Strategic Plan. The data tend to show continued improvement in teaching and learning enterprises, and they indicate that Chico State will be prepared to document IT initiatives for the Educational Effectiveness Review.

Decisions concerning information technology are subject to consultation and review by the University Technology Advisory Committee (involving faculty, staff, and students, and reporting to the CIO), the Provost, and the Information Technology Executive Committee, which recommends on policy, strategy, and resource allocation decisions to the President.

A strong indicator of IT’s centrality in the University’s proceedings is its prominent place in the Campus Strategic Plan, especially in priority III, Superior Knowledge and Learning-Enabling Resources.
1. **IT's Direct Involvement in Teaching and Learning Services:** Much of IT's involvement in Teaching and Learning falls under the aegis of the Academic Technologies (AT) unit, which reports to the Vice Provost for Information Resources. The AT staff oversees nearly all hardware, software, and training initiatives pertaining to the delivery of instruction: the learning management system (WebCT); smart classrooms; synchronous learning technology (Horizon-Wimba); multimedia machines and software; and training. Training of faculty, conducted by a highly developed Technology and Learning Program (TLP) appears to fulfill the 1996 WASC mandate that pedagogy drive the technology, not the other way around. Statistics on student and faculty use of Academic Technology's services, including WebCT adoption, show steady and significant increases. The TLP has developed a rubric for effective online instruction, one that maps well to WASC's own advisory on effective distance learning. (CFR 3.6)

Satisfaction surveys show strong support for those services, although some students encountered during the visit were critical of WebCT's implementation in courses. While nearly 2/3 of the faculty have employed WebCT and nearly 100% or the students report taking at least one course a semester employing WebCT, it is more challenging to document the effect on teaching and learning. Some use the learning management system as another location for documents and assignments. At the other end of the continuum, some use it to enhance or transform learning in directions of active learning and collaboration. Assessing the impact of such technology is thus difficult. Compounding the difficulty may be the question of where responsibility for the assessment lies. AT can document its success in reaching its constituency; but it is not
completely clear how the documentation of learning enhancement will proceed, and under whose hand. (CFR 4.4)

Another challenge, though perhaps not a major one, involves the underlying institutional rationale for online offerings. The team does not, here, criticize the rationale or suggest one. It is noted, however, that to the extent online offerings bespeak a pedagogical philosophy, it must be inferred from the programs and courses that currently exist, by online offerings’ clear link to North State initiatives, and by the individual testimony of faculty and staff involved in online learning. Online learning’s potential to enhance teaching and learning may be well understood by its practitioners, but that does not appear to have found its place in institutional discourse. This condition may leave the institution open to questions about the relationship between distance learning and overall educational purpose. (CFR 3.7)

A final challenge, and one that goes to the heart of AT’s centrality in the larger academic enterprise, involves the relationship of academic technology training to faculty development writ large. It has been suggested that the historical partnership between the Teaching and Learning Program (TLP) and the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) has fallen off. Chico’s strength in academic technology, evidenced in the place academic technology occupies in strategic planning, has been its historical tendency to treat academic technology as an integrated function. We would anticipate that, to the extent pedagogical training involving technology has been divorced from faculty development in general, the historical tradition will be degraded. (CFR 3.4)
2. Programs; Quality Assurance: The AT operation serves all forms of technologically enhanced education, from the most rudimentary employment of WebCT (AT provides a WebCT shell for every course offered in the University) to degree programs that feature distance modalities or are fully online (BA in Liberal Studies, BA in Social Science, BS in Computer Science, BSN for RN's, and Masters Programs in Computer Science and Interdisciplinary Studies: Science Education). The Professional MBA program, while offered on-site in Redding, also relies to some extent on distance learning technologies to integrate its offerings with its Chico campus counterpart. These programs appear to be robust and growing.

Chico State faces at least two challenges pertaining to such programs. First, the offerings, as all curricular offerings, must be assessed in terms of student attainment of learning outcomes. Secondly, it will be important to document that, at the worst, online and other distance modes are the educational equal of face-to-face learning on campus. It may be that, in some circumstances at least, such offerings produce superior results. Interviews with representatives of most of the programs mentioned above suggest that Chico will be prepared to provide such evidence for the Educational Effectiveness Review, and is currently collecting data that will enable this provision (CFR 2.2, 2.4).

3. Information Literacy: A team of library staff and faculty members shepherds the implementation of Chico State's strategic priority to assure the information literacy of students. Two important venues for the Information Literacy initiative are the First Year Experience and the Freshman Writing course, English 130. In addition, Information Literacy units have been implemented in lower and upper division courses in Political Science, Communication Studies, and Nursing. The library conducts around 250
bibliographic instruction sessions each semester, many geared toward specific programs or courses.

The IT Plan documents a series of activities aiming to “assure all students receive an introduction to basic information literary concepts and skills” and to “assure all students develop knowledge of information content and use for their major and chosen field.” In addition, the library has participated in the ETS ICT Literary Assessment and the LibQUAL library services survey, and can point to how faculty and students perceive their Information Literacy offerings. (CFR 2.2, 3.6)

Exposure and satisfaction constitute an important dimension of the Information Literacy initiative’s assessment, and this dimension is clearly present. Another dimension, entailing the gain in learning and the durability of that gain, has been subject to preliminary measures and is occasioning changes in the approach in the Freshman Experience and English 131. We anticipate continued development in this area of assessment. Such development might be assisted by the adoption of a shared rubric for Information Literacy, perhaps similar to one that has been employed in the library’s bibliographic instruction sessions.

Other aspects of the library’s relationship to teaching and learning concern its continuing development of electronic databases – many of them in association with other CSU institutions, and some locally – and its round-the-clock provision of reference aid in person, online, or through email. The library appears to have mitigated some effects of cutbacks in printed journals by increasing its electronic database complement. (CFR 3.6)
4. **IT Learning Infrastructure:** The University appears to be continuing its commitment to enhancing the infrastructure for teaching and learning. Ninety-eight classrooms are now technology enhanced (roughly 70 percent) with projectors, dvd/cd players, desktop computers and internet access. Faculty computers are replaced on a three-year cycle. Help-desk and other forms of support are continually available for faculty and students. Initiatives in enhanced security and identity management have been implemented. Perhaps owing to the mission-critical nature of instructional technology, the Information Resources is developing various metrics to make rapid adjustments; for example, a spike in student password resetting led to a rapid fix. Network traffic is monitored to assure premium bandwidth for academic activities. (CFR 3.6)

A second generation portal provides single sign-in access to several operations important to students and faculty, including PeopleSoft functions, web mail, grading, and WebCT. It is envisioned that the portal ultimately will link users to the Data Warehouse (see below).

Information Resources has developed several performance measures in this area and should be in a good position to document its activities for the Educational Effectiveness Review. (CFR 4.2, 4.3)

5. **IT Enterprise Knowledge and Management Systems:** Chico State has made a substantial commitment to using IT to enhance access to administrative services. The centerpiece of that commitment is the Common Management System (CMS), which brings together Human Resources, Finance, and Student Administration functions. The campus portal, mentioned above in connection with teaching and learning, provides the entire community with access to these functions. At the same time, Information
Resources is extending the CMS capabilities by developing a Data Warehouse that, over the next few years, will enable users to query administrative data across many functions.

Performance measures have been developed for these initiatives. Some (e.g., “Staff, faculty, and student employee satisfaction”) are self evident. Others (e.g., “increased access to data”) will require further operationalization in preparation for the EER. And one (“Improved institutional effectiveness,” a proposed measure of success in the priority to “Support institutional knowledge management for effective decision making”) may need considerable discussion. Nonetheless, these complicated initiatives to enhance IT’s role in assessment and decision making are by and large susceptible to assessment measures that are either already identified (and employed) or attainable in preparation for the EER.

One component of enterprise knowledge management under development is the STEPS (Student Tracking, Evaluation and Portfolio System) venture in the College of Business, and serving other programs, including programs not housed at Chico. It is listed here as an enterprise application, rather than teaching tool. This is because its primary aim is program assessment. Unlike other tools with the “portfolio” handle, STEPS is not built for student reflection and in-course iteration. (Such capabilities may be added, however.) Instead, starting with student assignments mapped to program goals, STEPS provides aggregating and reporting tools that may greatly assist systematic review of programs in light of educational goals. The team was informed that STEP’s integration with the other enterprise endeavors discussed above, while not explicitly mentioned in current documentation, is being planned. It will be important to
clarify its role amid the myriad other possibilities – enterprise-wide or narrower – for relating learning objectives to program assessment. (CFR 3.7, 4.2, 4.3)

6. **Concluding Notes on Enabling Resources:** Two challenges remain to be discussed in this section. First, the many accomplishments described above come from a staff that has remained relatively stable in number while its workload has increased. Implementation and upgrades of PeopleSoft have contributed to this increased workload. So, of course, has the pressure for accountability, giving rise to goal and strategy setting, the derivation of measures, the conduct of assessments, and feedback and incorporation of results. Finally, as at other institutions, Chico's Information Resources professionals may be victims of their own success. More classrooms to monitor, applications to support, and faculty to train challenge the staff to come up with efficiencies that do not sacrifice effectiveness and personal well being. No one has suggested that the staff is at a breaking point; but many have attested to the strain of doing more with less. (CFR 3.1, 3.5)

Secondly, while the commentary above repeatedly points to the existence or attainability of performance measures, it is important to note that such measures, in and of themselves, cannot fully account for Information Resources' activities and their effectiveness. As performance measures are refined in preparation for the EER, their meaning internally and to external audiences will depend on their clear linkage to priorities, equally clear analysis of their significance, and examples of ways in which both the data and the analyses lead to affirmation or adaptation. (CFR 4.2, 4.3, 4.4)

**D. Serving the Needs of the North State**
CSU, Chico considers itself “the University of the North State,” and notes that its service area of 12 counties includes 21% of the land mass of California (an area roughly the size of Ohio), but only 2% (740,000 people) of the population of the state. In such a large, rural area, the University has historically, and to its credit, accepted responsibility for being the “center for intellectual, cultural, and athletic activities” of the region.

Evidence of the activities of the University within its service area is abundant. Members of the Visiting Team met with focus groups representing five areas: Student Engagement; Intellectual/Educational Engagement; Economic Engagement; Artistic Engagement; and Environmental Engagement.

1. **Student Engagement**: The University is strongly committed to service learning and civic engagement, and while much of the organization of these activities is managed by students themselves, there is also a Director of Civic Engagement overseeing the entire process.

One of the more remarkable programs is CAVE (Community Action Volunteers in Education), a program that has been running for 40 years and currently involves about 2000 students annually, with activities in more than 20 programs. Some students are involved because of curricular requirements, but many are simply volunteers in activities such as mentoring and tutoring, sports, adult literacy, and assisting immigrants with citizenship issues.

One student testified that, over the past two years, he had spent 30 hours working in an elementary school, a weekend at the veterans hospital in Yountville, 30 hours working with citizenship programs, 60 hours at the probation department, time spent on the Butte County homeless census, and 480 hours at a cancer treatment
center. While his commitment may be the exception, it is nonetheless a remarkable example of the kind of commitment made by Chico students.

Other examples include the work of the College of Agriculture and its students working with 1000 K-12 students on Ag Day; students in the First Year Experience program working (with a tribe of Native Americans) to replace the exotic plantings of the Bidwells along Big Chico Creek with native plants; 120 students working with the Center for Nutrition and Physical Activity in all 12 counties of the service area (many of whom ultimately are placed, after graduation, in permanent positions in their home communities); and CLIC (Community Legal Information Center), a program with from 100 to 200 students who are trained by three lawyers on the faculty (and who, in turn, train other students) to provide legal information (not legal advice) to some 10,000 clients a year. The Office of Experiential Education assists students in departments where there is no formal internship requirement or where no faculty advisor is available, and thereby complements the other programs involving service learning and civic engagement.

The work of the students, and the faculty and staff who oversee them, is remarkable and highly commendable. However, the Visiting Team was struck by the relative absence of overall focus on these activities. Community service learning and civic engagement are clearly happening, and at a level that would be the envy of most campuses—but why doesn’t Chico identify these activities as a hallmark of a Chico education? Would it not be possible to show highly positive learning outcomes from these experiences? Does it make sense to encourage even more students to participate (only 15 departments currently require an internship)?
2. *Intellectual/Educational Engagement*: There is a strong commitment at CSU, Chico to connect faculty scholarship to the needs of the North State. There is, for example, very extensive involvement with the K-12 school system. Chico partners with about 100 schools; over 1000 teachers have come through the Math Project, and there has long been a Chico chapter of the California Writing Project. A hands-on laboratory in Natural Sciences, dedicated to meeting the needs and interests of K-12 students, is staffed by undergraduates who plan to become teachers. There is a partnership with the observatory built by the Kiwanis in Bidwell Park, with students as the primary docents. Chico has had a summer program for teachers since 1919.

The Public Events office is actively involved in this area. The campus radio station, with seven repeaters and translators in the North State, has the biggest service area in the nation, and is the number one station in the North State. In the last nine years, 205,000 K-12 students have seen theatre performances on campus.

There is a very significant level of activity in providing educational opportunities for people living in the Chico service area, and the campus is to be commended for its efforts in this area.

3. *Economic Engagement*: CSU, Chico is actively - even aggressively - involved in promoting the economic development of the North State. The Center for Economic Development was founded in 1986 with a federal grant. Currently, it produces an annual report of economic and demographic data for each of the 12 counties in the service area, with the bulk of the work being done by students. These reports then become the basis of economic development efforts in the respective counties.
Chico has developed a Geographic Information Systems lab, employing between 10 and 20 people, and involved in a like number of projects at any given time. Most of the clients are government entities, including both the city of Chico and Butte County.

The Office of Environmental Projects does about $1.5 million of business annually, working through the College of Engineering, and using student interns on projects such as the Iron Canyon fish ladder. A recent development with the concrete industry has resulted in Chico's being selected to complement a similar project at Middle Tennessee State, the focus being to prepare skilled workers for the concrete industry.

The College of Agriculture is involved with the Agriculture Research Initiative, a project that requires a match in dollars or in kind from non-Chico resources. Only the second organic dairy in the country is being developed by Chico, and clearly the agricultural needs of the region are being actively supported by this college.

The Center of Archeological Research, which is involved in both historic buildings and prehistoric sites, consults with parks, among other entities, and helps prepare students to work in these environments.

The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs oversees more than $23 million in grants and contracts, involving more than 600 separate awards, and supports the efforts of the faculty from the beginning to the end of the grant process.

4. **Artistic Engagement**: A portion of the Instructionally Related Activities fee of $36 per semester (totaling about $185,000 per year) is augmented by ticket sales and fund raising and forms the basis of the funds used by the arts programs for outreach.
The University Art Gallery regularly shows nationally known artists; a second gallery focuses more on regional artists; and the student gallery features student works. In addition, the print museum not only features its own collection, but also has print shows. External reviewers are brought in to judge student work. There is an annual summer show of high school art, and a kid’s camp in the arts as well. The consequence of all this work is a tight and extensive connection between the arts programs of the University and the surrounding community.

The Anthropology Museum, with a collection of about 1450 objects, focuses on both conservation and curation, and regularly has tours for K-12 students. It also works with local Hmong and Native American communities.

The Theatre Department features a touring ensemble of musical theatre students, with a focus on K-12, but the group also performs for new freshmen, and for service groups throughout the greater Chico area. The Court Theatre is in its 39th season, and has five shows a season. There are now seven theatre groups in Chico, and the University believes the high concentration of arts outlets in the Chico area is a direct result of the work of Chico State over the years.

The CSU Chico Symphony features both student and community members, and performs as far away as Redding.

The Visiting Team commends the efforts of the arts departments for their effective work in creating an unusually high awareness of the arts in the North State region.

5. Environmental Engagement/Sustainability: The University has added a new initiative to its strategic plan in the form of an extensive commitment to environmental
engagement and sustainability. This work began about a decade ago with an initial focus on the watershed and local environment, with the stated purpose of having the campus becoming more relevant to the North State. In the intervening years, the University has acquired 4000 acres above Bidwell Park, and an endowed chair, the Rawlins Endowed Professor of Environmental Literacy. Faculty hiring has focused on faculty with connections to sustainability, and the Associated Students has long run an extensive recycling program. The campus buys green products whenever possible, and has seen an increase in suppliers featuring these types of products as a consequence.

The campus has an active program to dispose of surplus property by making it available to non-profits, and has seen a dramatic decrease in the volume of materials being taken to the landfill.

The students are enthusiastic supporters of the sustainability initiative, and appreciate the freedom given to them by the campus to experience “aha!” moments, rather than just being told what to think. AS has just passed a $5/semester levy that is used to pay the salary of the sustainability coordinator, with the balance going to student organizations that are focused on sustainability. The students are also responsible for having the idea of the university farm growing organic food that it sells to the campus food service.

There is also an environmental art and film festival that allows the university to partner with community groups.

The Institute for Sustainable Development coordinates various of these initiatives, and the campus has directed $100,000 to support them.
The campus has also adopted a building standard that mandates that any new building must, at a minimum, meet LEED Silver standards.

In the curriculum, 147 courses across the campus have sustainability as a theme, and there are efforts under way to include that theme within the First Year Experience program. Student interns work with local businesses to help them “green” their business.

Faculty and staff serve on the Chico mayor’s climate committee to help the city become carbon neutral, and Chico State is also a part of Focus the Nation, an effort to have 1000 campuses nationwide celebrate January 31, 2008, as Sustainability Day.

The faculty and staff point out that consistency of vision from central administration has been critical to the success of this initiative, and mention both Provost McNall and President Zingg by name. The Visiting Team commends the vision and efforts of Chico State in identifying and implementing sustainability as a new way of engaging the campus with the surrounding community and looks toward the EE Review for evidence of the quality of the outcomes of those institutional endeavors to promote and enhance “sustainability” in both the curricular and the co-curricular enterprise.

E. Strategic Planning, Resource & Data Alignment: Towards Institutional Effectiveness and Accountability

1. Alignment of Strategic Plan and Resource Allocation: There appears to be widespread acceptance of the University's strategic plan. During the course of the visit, faculty, department chairs, and academic administrators who were part of the interviews spoke of the role that the plan plays in making resource allocation decisions. The use of the strategic plan to guide resource allocation starts at the top and filters all the way
to the faculty in the departments. Soon after President Zingg released the updated strategic plan, three major initiatives were funded: outreach activities designed to increase enrollment of underrepresented students (priority 1); support for advancement (priority 5); and sustainability initiatives (priority 6).

Under the direction of the Provost, Academic Affairs has developed two separate $1 million programs, each directly supporting the strategic plan. In the first case, Academic Affairs determined that 1% of its budget should be earmarked for faculty development. An accounting of all existing programs was made and subsequent investments in faculty development programs were made until the total expended equaled the $1 million goal. In the second case, funds were reallocated from college budgets to develop a central pool of funds held in the Provost’s office; these funds were allocated annually on a one-time basis to colleges who present their case for the funds in support of activities which are directly tied to the six priorities of the strategic plan.

Deans and department chairs confirmed that the process does encourage them to pay attention to the plan. One department chair stated that occasionally faculty will come up with ideas that require funding support but, after analysis, if it is determined that the proposal does not directly support the strategic plan, the proposal is put aside. After consultation with the Provost, each college dean receives a letter in July identifying certain college-based activities that will support different strategies within the plan. Deans are expected to provide a report in May that describes the results of the activities.

The team concludes that the University has developed a strategic plan which was developed with broad-based input on the part of the campus community (CFR 4.1).
The plan does influence resource allocation decisions made by decision-makers throughout the university (CFR 4.2). While there is much to commend about the role that the strategic plan plays in the resource allocation decisions, there are two concerns. First, while the strategic plan fully informs resource allocations within Academic Affairs, it is not clear from interviews on campus that the plan has the same importance for units outside of Academic Affairs. Second, and much more important, there is no evidence of a series of performance indicators attached to the activities identified under the six priorities of the plan; without these indicators, the University would be unable to demonstrate that they have met the desired goals under these overarching priorities.

The team recommends that the University should establish performance indicators related to the six priorities identified in the strategic plan. An assessment plan to demonstrate success in meeting these goals should be identified and available for the EE Review.

2. Alignment of Strategic Plan and Data Generation and Assessment: The University has been able to amass a tremendous amount of data and has, in many cases, made these data available to key decision makers. Department chairs report that data disks containing all of the data needed to perform a program review are delivered to them by the Office of the Vice Provost for Planning, Resource Allocation and Evaluation. At a meeting of the key providers of data within each of the four Vice Presidential divisions, it became clear that each of the divisions has been successful in developing important data bases for use both within and across the divisions. As was discussed with this group, it became clear that the data generation process is an interactive one. There are
often cases where a unit in the central administration will produce a new data set and make that available to academic departments; the existence of this new set will trigger new questions on the part of the department and necessitate a further development of data on the part of the central administration. Rather than being a problem, such an occurrence only supports the important role being played by those who are the source of data.

The team concludes that there appears to be a healthy interactive relationship between the providers and the consumers of data within the University (CFR 4.4). This favorable finding does not suggest that improvements could not be made. The University (CSU, Chico Capacity and Preparatory Review Report, page 30) stated: “While CSU, Chico demonstrates substantial capacity to collect and disseminate evidence, it demonstrates far less well the use of the results of assessment and evaluations to revise and improve structures, processes, curricula, and pedagogy…Chico has been a victim of its own data decentralization, at a modest level, making integration of its data and evidentiary information more difficult.”

While major strides have been made, Chico has not developed a true culture of evidence through a university-wide strategic management system. It does, however, report a commitment to achieving the goal of enterprise knowledge and information management systems (CSU, Chico Capacity and Preparatory Review Report, page 31).

In direct support of Priority 3 of the Strategic Plan, the University has begun an Enterprise Knowledge Management Initiative, which plans to use technology to support the assessment of student outcomes and institutional effectiveness. Progress has been made and over 2,000 measures have been loaded into the database using the
Performancesoft/PBViews platform. The success of this initiative will depend not on the ability to load pieces of data, but rather on the ability of the university to turn these data into valuable assessment tools. The establishment of such a database (incorporating data from all divisions of the university) will greatly facilitate the University's ability to assess its educational effectiveness.

The team recommends that the University should make the development of the Enterprise Knowledge Management Initiative one of its highest priorities in order to facilitate the assessment of educational effectiveness; we hope to hear more about this at the time of the EE Review. The University appears to have the infrastructure in the form of policy, institutional structure, organization, people, and ethos in order to get the job done.

III. Conclusion

A. Preparedness for the Educational Effectiveness Review

The WASC Review Team has observed many of the strengths and challenges delineated in CSU Chico's Concluding Essay. For example, its reference to the campus as an “inclusive learning community of faculty, staff, and students” appears to be evident and is a characteristic of the environment in which faculty, staff and students take great pride.

Resources are being invested to attract and retain underrepresented minority students, faculty, and staff. Additionally, creative examples of linking current students with students from different backgrounds through online projects, partnerships, and community service demonstrate serious attempts to incorporate diversity into a campus
community whose rural location and regional demographics do not naturally lend itself to a diverse student body.

Professional development for faculty and staff was apparent as was the university's broad and long-term emphasis on information technology use in its learning and working environment.

Long-standing programs such as CAVE point to the university's assertion that service is central to its institutional character and distinguishes its students and alumni. The existence of its many partnerships and community programs as well as its recent designation as a Carnegie Engaged University supports its claim of strong community engagement.

Few of these characteristics, however, are supported by assessment activities that could provide powerful evidence for telling the Chico story. It is clear that substantial action is being taken to develop "systematic assessment and evaluation of efforts to promote student success," but generally this development is in the early stages and data are infrequently analyzed, interpreted and utilized for institutional improvement. Nor do most of the examples of analysis and application that the team discovered appear to be systematic or strategic. In fact, the Strategic Plan currently contains no performance indicators, benchmarks, targets or timelines by which progress can be measured.

The University's Concluding Essay says "the core capacity of the university—clear purpose, high levels of integrity, fiscal stability, and organizational structures to fulfill its purposes—is evident" and "provides and will continue to provide the basis for examining and improving CSU, Chico's educational effectiveness." While the team
accepts the university's integrity and intention, concerns exist about the degree to which it will be able to accomplish all that it sets out to achieve for the Educational Effectiveness Review and the added strain this may put on the organization.

While strategically focused assessment and performance indicators will help make the institution's purpose and progress clearer, implementation of the systems being worked on (e.g., web-based KPI's, PBViews, Data Warehouse, data-based Program Review) will require considerable human and financial resources to implement and maintain. Faculty and staff expertise clearly exists or is being developed, but personnel are stretched thin. In addition, with lower enrollment targets (which are the basis for state dollars) than the CSU average, the financial costs of these implementations will have to be carefully managed. This situation is not unrecognized by Chico State's administration, as noted in the last paragraph of the Challenges and Recommendations section of the Concluding Essay. However, the Team wishes to acknowledge these challenges as CSU Chico moves toward the final stage of its re-accreditation, the Educational Effectiveness Review.

B. Major Findings and Recommendations

The team found CSU Chico to be a vibrant and healthy institution with many admirable qualities. The University is particularly to be commended for its strong community, and the remarkable commitment of the faculty, staff, and administration to student success. Even with this very strong foundation, there are still issues and challenges to be addressed. In this section some of the most important recommendations are summarized. However, the team also has included here many
points of commendation, in recognition of the outstanding culture at Chico and its many exemplary programs and initiatives.

1. The team was impressed with the goals of the strategic plan. The plan was well known to the members of the Chico Community, and integrated into important aspects of university function, such as allocation of resources for new initiatives and review of faculty for tenure and promotion. However, the team recommends that the University should establish performance indicators related to the six priorities identified in the strategic plan. An implemented assessment plan demonstrating successes in meeting these goals should be part of the institution’s EE Review presentation.

2. The campus needs to improve the manner by which it attests to its achievements in both the academic and the non-academic arenas. Such improvement would include:
   
   o A more organized, less scattershot approach to data gathering, such that strategic imperatives and important goals (e.g., “The Chico Experience”) do not appear merely as the sum of many disassociated parts;
   
   o Analysis and clear conclusions that are linked to, and derive from, the data;
   
   o A discussion of significance: how the evidence becomes incorporated in affirming, disconfirming, or changing programs, behaviors, policies, etc.

3. Evidence of the degree to which program assessment and learning outcomes assessment is taking place is inconsistent. Despite some positive developments, such as the establishment of the AURA (All University Responsibility for
Assessment) committee, and the initiation of assessment efforts in certain academic departments, team members were generally still concerned about the lack of widespread progress on analysis and interpretation of data, and the lack of evidence that data are routinely used for programmatic improvement. The team looks forward to reviewing additional documentation and evidence for the implementation of assessment plans during the EE review.

- The team particularly anticipates a careful, evidence-based analysis of the effectiveness of the General Education and First Year Experience programs as a component of the Educational Effectiveness review, due to their intended role as a major point of focus, and their importance in meeting educational goals embedded in several Criteria for Review.

4. CSU, Chico needs to find ways of identifying and committing resources to the program assessment initiative, in order to support that initiative and to implement the inevitable changes that will emanate from these reviews. A significant number of academic programs need to have learning assessment, with results demonstrating educational effectiveness, in place for the Educational Effectiveness Review.

5. The team recommends that the University should make the development of the Enterprise Knowledge Management Initiative one of its highest priorities in order to facilitate the assessment of educational effectiveness; we hope to hear more about this at the time of the EE Review. The University appears to have the infrastructure in the form of policy, institutional structure, organization, people, and ethos in order to get the job done.
6. The team recommends that the campus invest in a unique opportunity to build first year learning community programs by carefully articulating the aspects of the Chico Experience that enhance student affinity for the community and that support academic success. While theme housing exists, there is not a formal linkage between the curricular and co-curricular. Formalizing the relationship between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs could provide a truly distinctive residential learning community. It is further recommended that this investment include commitment of resources for faculty development, and for professional staff in Student Life and Advising.

7. The previous team report expressed significant concern with the climate for under-represented minority students at Chico. The present team commends the University for progress, under the strong leadership of President Zingg, on this very important and challenging issue. Despite these welcome signs of progress, there are still significant concerns about the climate in the community, and recruitment and retention of minority students, faculty, and staff. The team recommends that the campus consider articulating the need for increased diversity as more than merely equitable access, as important as that is; it is critical for the education of all of Chico's students, since interaction with a community of diverse backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives is intrinsic to the comprehensive university experience and essential for success in an increasingly multi-cultural and globalized society.
8. The team commends the University for its strong, collaborative, and experienced staff, which is committed to providing superior support systems that promote engagement and student success for the 'whole' student at Chico. Students in turn feel strongly about their role as active citizens within the Chico community and are proud of their service and their role in turning around the 'image' of student behavior within the community. Chico students also take great pride in their ability to work in teams and campus recruiters confirmed that this is a factor that distinguishes them in the job market.

9. The team recommends that Student Affairs fully engage in a comprehensive program review process involving assessment and development of outcomes specific to the strategic plan. It is further recommended that the University consider involving faculty on Student Affairs program review teams. It would be helpful to send Student Affairs staff to WASC workshops in order that they might increase their understanding of WASC standards, and the relationship of the standards to the Student Affairs area. Finally, the team recommends that Academic Affairs and Student Affairs work together to identify ways in which they might form more effective partnerships in support of student success.

10. Reformation of the Greek system and the president's initiative on reducing the prevalence of alcohol are highly commendable.

11. The team recommends that the University develop a long-range deferred maintenance plan and refresh plan for the residence halls. Additionally, a housing master plan is needed. The goal would be to develop a plan that is compatible with the university's enrollment plan, continuing to provide housing for
first year students and increase the availability of on-campus housing for returning students.

12. The CPR Report and the visiting team's experience on campus provide substantial evidence that CSU Chico has taken suggestions of the previous team seriously and achieved many successes in the integration of technology into the academic life. In addition, information technology is helping to provide more effective linkages between academic and other administrative functions on campus, and between the campus and its principal offsite location in Redding.

- The team notes two challenges regarding information technology. First, the staff has remained relatively stable in number while its workload has increased. No one has suggested that the staff is at a breaking point; but many have attested to the strain of doing more with less. Secondly, as in other areas discussed here, performance measures for information resources and technology at Chico will need to be refined for the Educational Effectiveness Review.

13. The North State Initiative is very impressive, and the new Sustainability Initiative is particularly commendable. The quality of civic engagement is impressive, with CAVE (Community Action Volunteers in Education) being particularly commendable. Additionally, CSU, Chico has established itself as a major force in economic development, the arts, and support of K-12 education.

14. The team recommends that the University systematically consider succession planning for long-term staff. There is some concern that staff and faculty may be becoming overburdened by a combination of reduced numbers (especially
among the staff), more work, and loss of institutional knowledge because of retirement incentive programs.