Questions Shaping Project # 5 of
CSU, Chico’s Educational Effectiveness Review:
Refinement of the Academic Program Review

CSU, Chico recognizes that program review processes play a key role in the
improvement of its undergraduate and graduate educational offerings. Such reviews
provide a framework for quality management in our program offerings and other
educational activities. They have the potential to systematize a program’s approach to
academic quality and educational excellence. Accordingly, Chico proposed to refine its
Five-Year Program Review processes as one of its areas of emphasis in its Educational
Effectiveness Review.

More specifically, CSU, Chico proposed to develop a new framework for Academic
Program Review. The elements of this new framework are to align under the strategic
priorities of the university, the ten principles of Cornerstones, the principles of the CSU
Accountability Process, and the “core commitments” to institutional capacity and
educational effectiveness that are embodied in the new WASC accreditation standards.
The new review process is intended to refocus programs toward becoming more
systematic and intentional about gathering data about the right things—performance and
effectiveness—and on using the resulting information to continuously improve what the
program does.

Questions to shape the refinement of the Academic Program Review Process include:

- How do we ensure that Program Review is considered to be an integral part of
managing the university, college, department and/or program?
- How do we structure criteria for review and guidelines for documentation so that self
studies shift from program description to illustrations of how well programs perform
relative to their goals and standards of performance? How do we shift toward
effectiveness and performance indicators beyond inputs and resources as the
organizing basis for defining and evaluating program quality?
- How do we overcome barriers to effective program review? How do we ensure that
the opportunity for critical reflection is not lost in the desire to get things done? How
do we foster a leadership of engagement in program evaluation?
- How do we make program review more than a periodic event and encourage
significant levels of on-going engagement by internal and external stakeholders in
issues of program capacity and program effectiveness?
- How do we instill a culture of evidence in which a spirit of reflection and continuous
improvement based on data receives a matter-of-fact acceptance as a tool for decision
making? That is, how do we move beyond mere collection of ‘piles of evidence’ to
analysis, interpretation, meaning making, and ultimately, informed decision making?