

**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 following are selected excerpts from the Capacity and Preparatory Review¹ Report that relate to or address aspects of the *Chico Experience*:



- *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. (Page 4).



- 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. (Page 5).



- 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. (Page 6).

¹ The full report may be found at <http://www.csuchico.edu/vpaa/wasc/cpr/index.html>



- 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. (Page 17)



- 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. (Page 17)



- 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. (Page 18).



- 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’. (Page 18).



- 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. (Page 19).



- Chico's support of the whole student is evident through the work of staff supporting student mental health and physical well-being. ... Staff are cognizant of their role is teaching students life long skills regarding their health and their relationship with their health care providers. (Page 19).



- 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. (Page 20).



- 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. (Page 31).



- 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. (Page 31).



- 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. (Page 36).



- 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. (Page 43).