

Essay I: High-Quality Learning Environments

Believing in the primacy of learning, we will continue to develop high-quality learning environments both inside and outside the classroom.

CSU, Chico sees its unique residential situation as an opportunity to create an intensive, high-quality learning environment both in and outside the classroom. In its [mission](#) statement, Chico proclaims “The University is committed to assist students in their search for knowledge and understanding and to prepare them with the attitudes, skills, and habits of lifelong learning in order to assume responsibility in a democratic community and to be useful members of a global society.” To meet this commitment, CSU, Chico has over many years developed structures, policies and practices geared towards affecting student learning and student success.

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Recruit, Enroll, Support, and Graduate a Diverse High-Quality Student Population

Recruitment and Admission

CSU, Chico’s recruitment and outreach activities are designed to meet the California State University (CSU) objectives of access and quality as well as Chico’s goals of recruiting, enrolling, and graduating a high-quality and diverse student population. Efforts include both system and university level programs such as the [How To Get to College Program](#), the [Early Assessment Program](#), [Educational Talent Search](#), [America Reads/Counts](#), [Summer Bridge](#), [Upward Bound](#), [MESA](#), and [Community Service Learning](#). Over the past five years, CSU, Chico has further developed its [electronic access](#) opportunities and [relationship building capabilities](#), enhanced its [summer orientation](#) programs, and expanded its commitment to regional colleges by partnering in four-year degree programs and joint enrollment programs.

First-time freshman applicants must meet CSU [admission requirements](#) and are encouraged to submit SAT-I or ACT scores, regardless of GPA. The latter factors are used to compute the eligibility index students must meet to be admitted to CSU, Chico. [Transfer admission](#) requirements and [graduate admission](#) requirements similarly govern the admission of transfer students and graduate students respectively. Prospective students may submit [paper applications](#) or [on-line applications](#) to be admitted to the University.

Preparing for Success

The California State University system (CSU) requires that students take the English Placement Test and the Entry Level Mathematics ([EPT/ELM](#)) exam after admission and prior to enrollment in the CSU unless they have been exempted by means of scores earned on other appropriate tests. The English Placement Test assesses students’ ability in reading and writing, while the Entry Level Mathematics exam assesses students’ ability in math through beginning and intermediate algebra, and plane geometry. CSU, Chico boasts a 97 percent [success rate](#) in both Math and English remediation within the first year.

[Summer Orientation](#) is the most widely recognized orientation program across campus, and the program in which the most new students (85-90% of first-time freshmen and 50% of transfer students) voluntarily participate. Advising, course selection, and registration are the primary activities during Summer Orientation. During 2005, a majority of students (85%) reported having met with a faculty advisor during orientation and approximately 97 percent agreed the advisor was helpful. Over 98 percent of participating students and over 95 percent of parents have indicated a high level of [satisfaction](#) with key program goals.

The week prior to the start of classes (for each semester), new students are invited to participate in a variety of activities and meetings that are designed to acknowledge and celebrate their presence as new members of the campus and the Chico

community, through the [Getting Connected](#) program. Getting Connected focuses on the actual physical and social transition to university life.

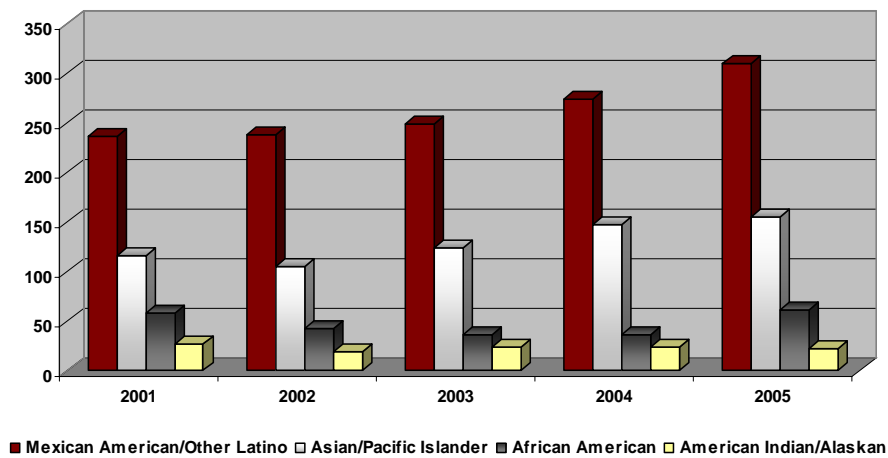
Diverse Student Population

Previous WASC teams have noted that diversity is a major issue for CSU, Chico. The 1996 Visiting Team concluded: “Historically, CSU, Chico has been a campus that has attracted mostly suburban, middle-class students from other parts of California. Those students are less numerous today and more the subject of intense recruitment competition.” The team recommended, “It will be incumbent upon CSU, Chico to recruit students from minority groups in order to maintain its share of total CSU enrollments. CSU, Chico should continue to build a strong marketing program that will reach out into minority communities and show minority students how it pays to go to CSU, Chico.” In his first [convocation address in August of 2004](#), President Zingg stated that Chico would be setting ambitious goals to add diversity to its campus community, and to do more to engage the entire community in the challenging work of increasing awareness of, and respect for, diversity. To bring about the institutional change required to succeed in translating the diversity value into action, CSU, Chico has chosen to develop a Diversity Scorecard as a vehicle to mobilize institutional attention and action. The [Scorecard](#) project recognizes four interrelated dimensions of campus diversity: Access and Success, Campus Climate and Inter-group Relations, Education and Scholarship, and Institutional Viability and Vitality. The further development of a *CSU, Chico Diversity Scorecard* is the subject of one of the projects in CSU, Chico’s Educational Effectiveness Review.

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[Special outreach efforts](#) have been mounted to address the “access” dimension of the scorecard so as to bring about an increase in the diversity of our student population. Encouraging successes have been recorded and serve to stimulate further action and commitment.

Figure 1.1
CSU, Chico Freshmen Student of Color Enrollments



Structuring and Nurturing the Total Education of Our Students

First Year Experience

In its [Statement of Philosophy of the First Year Experience](#), CSU, Chico recognizes that “the first year of university life is critical to student learning and success.” It goes on to note that “we can intentionally help first-year students reach educational and growth goals and achieve success.” This [campuswide commitment](#) is intended to help students make a successful transition to, and establish their place in, university life – a life that finds support and encouragement both in the classroom and in all aspects of university and community experiences outside the classroom.

[Course Link](#), a successful 10-year-old program, enrolls cohorts of students into blocks of general education and major courses. Students attend the three linked classes with the same group of students. By putting the same students together,

they get to form study groups faster, they develop camaraderie, and they feel part of a community, which is vital for transition to university life – and success. Each fall, more than 900 first-year students [enroll](#) in Course Link.

Other academic programs aimed at facilitating new students' success include the Freshmen General Studies Thematic ([FGST](#)) program and the Honors programs. FGST molds standard general education requirements into an integrated distinctive program that presents students with a coherent, multi-dimensional picture of Western Civilization from pre-history to present. FGST students note the advantages of a sense of community and friendship that the program makes possible as well as the rich diversity of activities both inside and outside the classroom. To provide additional unique educational opportunities and keep students challenged, the University has Honors in General Education ([HGE](#)) and the Honors in the Major ([HIM](#)) programs. These programs offer students the opportunity to work closely with some of the University's best professors in small, specially designed general education courses or on research projects. Successful completion of the program is prominently noted on the graduate's diploma and transcripts.

Programs designed to support and encourage students outside the classroom are many and varied. Many first-year students take advantage of university housing. University Housing and Food Service ([UHFS](#)) operates residence halls for over 1900 students, mostly freshmen. UHFS has created many programs that "bring the classroom to the residence halls" through academic and non-academic thematic housing units, which provide students with intensive student environments and special contact with faculty. Programming throughout the residence halls is designed to help these young adults succeed not only as students, but as members of our society. *The First-Year Survivor Workshop Series*, for example, is presented in the residence halls during the first eight weeks of the semester. The workshops, often led by peer educators, focus on helping first-year students "survive" the [transition](#) to being college students living away from home and facing tough decisions daily. Workshop topics include eating disorders, time management, study skills, homesickness, sexual responsibility, and alcohol and high-risk drinking.

The University has made alcohol and drug education and prevention a priority for its student population. The Campus Alcohol & Drug Education Center ([CADEC](#)) is committed to providing educational programs and events that [raise the awareness of the dangers](#) of high-risk alcohol and drug use. The goal is to encourage students to make responsible choices and support students struggling with substance abuse issues. Starting in 2005–2006, all freshmen were required to complete [AlcoholEdu](#) for College as a prevention measure. Students who did not complete the program were not allowed to register for second semester classes. Over 75 percent of the participants [reported](#) feeling better prepared to make decisions and stated they had increased their knowledge about alcohol use and its risks. *The Nature of Student Engagement at a Residential Campus* is one of the themes for CSU, Chico's Educational Effectiveness Review.

General Education

The CSU, Chico General Education program ([GE](#)) conforms to [Title 5](#) of the State of California Code of Regulations and directive from the California State University ([CSU](#)). In addition, it reflects the values of the University. *Core* courses build the foundation for student success in both the GE program and the major by emphasizing fundamental skills: oral communication, written communication, critical thinking, and quantitative reasoning. *Breadth* courses extend student engagement to a wide variety of disciplines selected from the natural sciences, the humanities and fine arts, and the behavioral and social sciences. Finally, Capstone *Upper-Division Themes* are designed to provide students the opportunity to integrate a variety of skill and content areas as they explore enduring questions about our complex world.

Assessment efforts, in general, and for general education ([GEAC](#)), in particular, are monitored, guided, and supported by our All University Responsibility for Assessment Committee ([AURA](#)). AURA provides campus leadership for ongoing campuswide conversations on the nature of student learning assessment and its relationship to effective teaching, learning, and advising. Progress is being made in defining student learning outcomes in core areas of [GE](#) as well as in creating the rubrics that are helpful in assessing and evaluating student work products. The collection of cross-sectional data on student performance in writing, oral communication, and quantitative reasoning in GE classes allows comparisons of first-year students versus seniors, across colleges and between native and transfer students. Assessment data are being shared widely on campus and are guiding efforts at curricular and pedagogical changes to enhance student learning. *GE Assessment* is one of the projects in CSU, Chico's Educational Effectiveness Review.

Distinctive Undergraduate Programs

CSU, Chico offers 66 undergraduate [degree programs](#) in the liberal arts and in professional and technical areas. Many of our majors are divided into [areas of specialization](#) either as options or patterns. In addition, students may choose from a wide variety of minors, teaching credentials, and certificates. Each program has developed a detailed, self-service guide known as Major Academic Plan or [MAPS](#). Through MAPS, students can find the requirements for their major or explore other majors that may interest them. Advising methods are customized to fit each academic unit and its students. In some cases (e.g., College of Business), there is a centralized office staffed by professional academic advisors. In other departments, students receive personalized attention from individual faculty members. In addition to advising within the major, the University has a [centralized](#) academic advising service.

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Since 1971, the CSU Trustees have required that regular, qualitative review of existing programs be conducted by campuses. General education programs as well as degree programs are subject to review. Accordingly, CSU, Chico has subjected its non-accredited degree programs to five-year [program reviews](#). Over the past four years, Chico has experimented with outcomes-based program review in an effort to transform institutional decision making, especially regarding student learning and development. Five-year program review processes are to be refined as part of our Educational Effectiveness Review. 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.

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Distinctive Graduate Programs

While CSU, Chico is an institution for excellence in undergraduate education, it also has many vital, high-quality graduate programs. Post-Baccalaureate students comprise about 9 percent of CSU, Chico's students. The University offers [35 master's degree programs](#) ranging from professional degrees that meet the needs of the North State (e.g., Masters in Business Administration, Masters in Social Work, MS in Nursing, Masters in Public Administration, MA in Educational Leadership) through traditional liberal arts degrees such as English, History, Anthropology, and Political Science, to technical degrees that attract large numbers of international students, such as Computer Science and Electrical and Computer Engineering. [Proposals](#) for new graduate programs are carefully documented and scrutinized.

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New graduate students are provided assistance similar to that given to new undergraduates, to help them acclimate to the University and the community. The [Graduate School](#) offers a new-student orientation at the beginning of each semester. It is designed to give students an overview of the entire process of graduate study, including the various steps necessary to arrive at graduation and who is available to help them at each point. The Graduate School publishes [A Guide to Graduate Studies: Policies, Procedures, & Format](#) to help students navigate through the procedures required to earn a master's degree.

To facilitate success through graduate school, each master's program has a graduate coordinator who assists students throughout their graduate education, starting at the time of application. In addition, most students will work closely with one or two faculty mentors, especially when writing a thesis or project.

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Deepening the Chico Experience

CSU, Chico seeks to offer a set of enriching educational experiences that deepen the sense of a distinctive *Chico Experience* for all our students. Through co-curricular programs and a vast array of other learning opportunities both on and beyond the campus, students can increase their levels of academic, intellectual, cultural, social and civic engagement, and personal development. Such learning opportunities include exposure to [diversity](#), [student organizations](#), [student leadership programs](#), [intercollegiate athletics](#) and [recreational sports](#) programs, [internships](#), civic and [community service](#), [international programs](#), and [study abroad](#).

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One of the opportunities for exposure to diversity is the [Conversations on Diversity](#) series. Hosted by a committee of faculty and staff, this series is a safe place for members of the campus community to discuss challenges faced by our diverse community as we grow and change as a campus. These forums are offered regularly and are very well attended. The University facilitates students' learning of other cultures and countries via various international programs. The [Study Abroad](#) program is affiliated with over 50 institutions of higher learning in 18 countries and has been in continuous operation for over 40 years. In addition, many of the University's colleges and departments offer their own international programs,

including the College of Humanities and Fine Arts' [London Semester](#) and [Travel Programs](#); [Latin American Studies'](#) Cultural Immersion Program in Merida, Mexico; and Italian Studies' [Viareggio Summer Program](#).

A [core value](#) for the University is a commitment to promoting student success through civic engagement and service learning. Chico State houses many programs that support student success and contribution via [service learning](#). These programs include Community Action Volunteers in Education ([CAVE](#)) and the Community Legal Information Center ([CLIC](#)). Our campus is also supported by an [Office of Community Service Learning](#) at the CSU Chancellor's Office. CSU, Chico further offers a variety of [internship](#) programs, coordinated by the [Office of Experiential Education](#). More than 47 departments across our seven colleges incorporate internships into their programs, either as a degree requirement or an elective. Over the last 30 years, almost 2,000 students have interned each year.

Opportunities to participate in campus life, community service, and professional development are provided by university-recognized student organizations. The University recognizes and supports nearly 200 [student organizations](#), including cultural, professional, religious, special interest, political, recreational, social, honorary, and service groups, with over 6,000 student participants. Support for these organizations comes from required advisors, the [Student Activities Office](#) services and leadership programs, and, in the case of professional and academic groups, college and department offices. The University actively partners with the independent Associated Students ([AS](#)) organization, whose mission it is "to enrich the quality of campus life" and "to complement the educational mission if the University." This mission is pursued through various facets of the AS, including student governance, student union facilities, and a broad spectrum of programs and services and the success of these efforts are [reported annually](#).

The Wildcat Activity Center ([WAC](#)) is currently being designed, with construction to start early 2007. [Sasaki Architects](#) is designing the two-story, 109,000-square-foot facility with a three-court gym, 15,000-square-foot fitness facility, climbing wall and bouldering area, indoor running track, four multi-purpose rooms, and a 10-lane recreational pool and spa. This exciting new facility will foster healthy behaviors among all members of the campus community.

Superior Support Systems

CSU, Chico is committed to maintaining superior support systems that promote student engagement and student success. Efforts are mounted to help students perform well academically, thrive socially, and cope effectively with nonacademic responsibilities.

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Academic Support Systems

For over 20 years, the Student Learning Center ([SLC](#)) has demonstrated its capacity to promote student development and success. The motto of the SLC, "Promoting Independent Learning" reflects the center's commitment to providing student guidance, skill development, information, training, and referrals to other campus resources.

There are three programs under the umbrella of the Student Learning Center: (1) Tutorial Assistance focuses on providing tutoring appointments in an individual or group setting for more than 70 academic subjects; (2) Supplemental Instruction workshops for eight to 11 courses each semester, integrating course content with learning skills; and (3) Study Skills Assistance with workshops offered in a range of subjects such as time management, test taking, note taking, memory techniques, and reading.

The [University Writing Center](#)'s mission is to (1) provide on-going training and development in the teaching and learning of writing to student tutors; and (2) offer writing assistance to students at every level, from first-year to graduate, in any discipline. The goal is to create a learning community that fosters student-faculty contact and encourages active learning and cooperation among students. Between January 1, 2005 and April 12, 2006, 2,033 students took advantage of the services provided by the center.

For the past decade, CSU, Chico has invested in academic technology to support high-quality learning environments both inside and outside the classroom. This investment includes not only direct instructional technology but also those administrative systems that enable students to come to the University and attend classes. Student support systems include access to the electronic resources that support curricula, a vibrant [library](#) that continues to serve as a "virtual space for student research, study and reflection, information literacy programs, and a state-of-the-art electronic learning

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infrastructure.” The nature and scope of CSU, Chico’s information technology support for learning is detailed in [Essay III: Superior Knowledge and Learning-Enabling Resources](#).

Student Support Systems

The University supports students as whole people, and therefore provides services for both the body and the mind. The [Student Health Center](#), an outpatient primary care clinic, provides services such as the treatment of acute conditions, injuries, and illnesses. It also offers a family planning program. The Office of Disability Support Services ([DSS](#)) assists students with disabilities in achieving equal access to all our academic programs and facilities and ensures that they have an equal opportunity for physical, social, and intellectual growth. DSS provides a variety of services to university students with temporary or permanent disabilities at no charge. DSS advisors are available to assist students with individual accommodations. The Psychological Counseling, Wellness, and Testing Center ([PCWT](#)) promotes student success through direct and indirect services to students. Through individual and group counseling, PCWT helps students deal with the emotional issues that affect their academic lives. Campuswide workshops and forums addressing psychological wellness issues are also offered.

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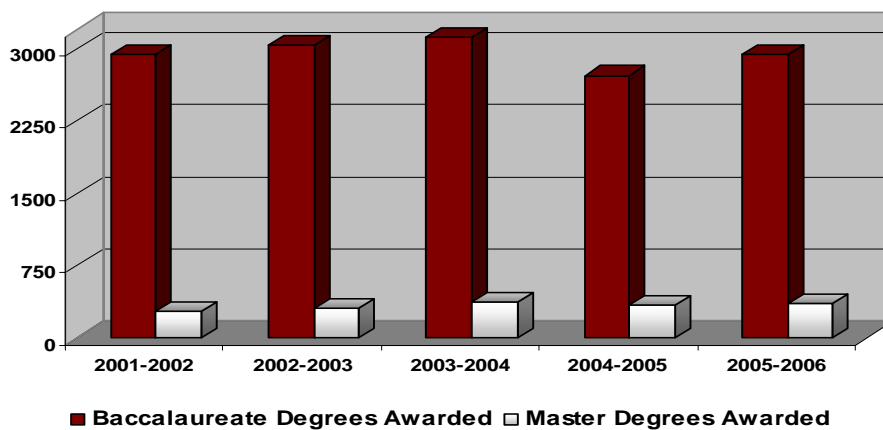
The University also invests resources in retention efforts by reaching out to “at-risk” students before they encounter serious academic difficulties. These efforts help the students develop proper study habits and time-management skills. “At-risk” students are students who are first-generation college students, have demonstrated signs of impending academic failure, have adapted poorly to college life, and/or students whose performance in high school indicates they would need extra support here at Chico. One of the bright spots in this effort is the Business Resource Center ([BRC](#)), a program started by the College of Business in 1998. The BRC not only reaches out to high schools and partners with them to attract minority students, but also sponsors thematic living and provides tutoring, mentoring, and social support for students once enrolled at Chico State. Along with the BRC, other campus programs such as the Educational Opportunity Program ([EOP](#)), [Upward Bound](#) (an outreach program for regional high schools), Alliance for Minority Participation ([AMP](#)), and Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement ([MESA](#)) work to facilitate the success of students from minority populations.

Effectiveness of Efforts to Promote Student Success

CSU, Chico is committed to student success, broadly defined in terms of high levels of learning, persistence, graduation, and satisfaction.

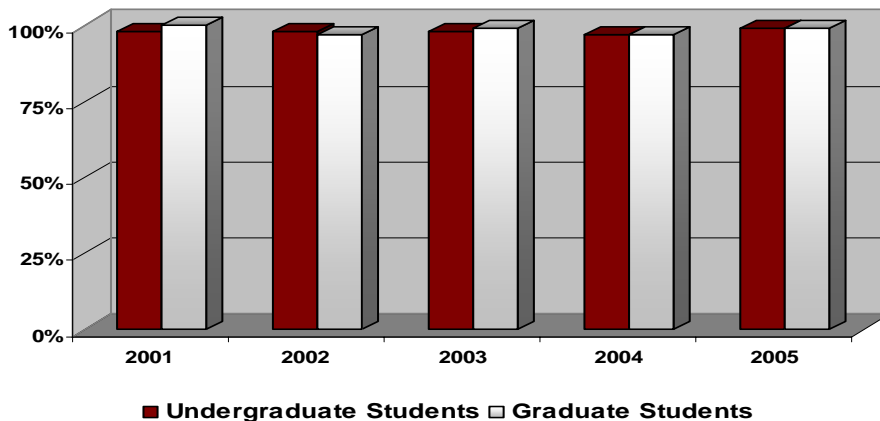
Chico’s [persistence and graduation](#) rates are among the highest in the California State University system. First-year retention rates for the past five years have averaged 82 percent for first-time freshmen and California community college (CCC) transfer students. Graduation rates for first-time freshmen for whom CSU, Chico is the campus of origin have averaged 57 percent over the past five years, while CCC transfers graduated at an average rate of 75 percent during the same time period. These rates are reflected in the number of degrees awarded annually.

Figure 1.2
Total Number of Degrees Awarded at CSU, Chico



Overall in 2005, 99 percent of both undergraduate and graduate students expressed satisfaction with CSU, Chico as a whole.

Figure 1.3
Satisfaction with CSU, Chico as a Whole



Summary

California State University, Chico, is committed to student learning and success and is organized to do so. This commitment is to be operationalized through the recruitment, retention, and graduation of a diverse and high-quality student population, the purposeful structuring and nurturing of the students' total education, the maintenance of superior student support systems, and the systematic assessment and evaluation of efforts to promote student success.

Chico's recruitment and outreach structures and activities are designed to meet system-level and campus-level goals and objectives. Programs at both these levels are targeted, far ranging, substantial, and mostly effective. Nevertheless, Chico continues to struggle with the diversification of its student population. Special outreach efforts and retention programs have been mounted and show some initial success. The campus intends to address this challenge further through its diversity scorecard project as part of its educational effectiveness review projects.

Chico sees its unique residential context as an opportunity to facilitate a broad scope of student engagement and personal growth. Academic and intellectual engagement is possible through Special Programs, the First Year Experience, for example, the General Education program, and an array of distinctive graduate and undergraduate programs. Cultural, social, personal growth, and civic engagement are further enabled by superior student support programs and enriching educational experiences. In recognition of these special efforts, Chico recently achieved the [Carnegie Elective Classification](#) for Community Engagement.

Progress is being recorded in the more systematic assessment of efforts to promote student success. While the Chico's "culture of evidence" is described and analyzed in Essay V, evidence related to student success is being highlighted in this essay. Such measures as "number of degrees awarded" and "satisfaction with overall education" at Chico State are routinely reported. It is less clear how this evidence and related measures are being used to improve programs, however. Assessment is a major theme in the campus's upcoming educational effectiveness review.