

Reaffirmation of WASC Accreditation for California State University, Chico



"The team is here from what accrediting agency?"

Educational Effectiveness Review 2008 / 2009

CSU, Chico Reaccreditation Team Efforts 2004-2009

WASC	<i>Steering Committee</i>	Council for Institutional Effectiveness and Accountability
Reviews	Projects	Project Leaders
CPR	Performance Measurement System	CIE&A
EER	NSSE Project -- Analyze and act upon Chico's performance in NSSE benchmark areas of academic excellence.	McNall
EER	Diversity -- Embed diversity in our assessment of educational effectiveness.	Blackstone
EER	Substance Abuse -- Assess the efficacy of Chico's comprehensive alcohol / drug education programs.	Moon
EER	First Year Experience -- Examine factors that promote learning for first-year freshmen students and participate in the Foundation of Excellence Program.	Loker
EER	Academic Program Review -- Develop a new framework for academic program review that focuses programs on becoming more systematic and intentional about gathering and using data to improve program performance.	Rethans
EER	GE Assessment -- Demonstrate our established mechanisms for translating GE assessment information into actual program changes. Present cases of our commitment to a culture of evidence and a culture of learning.	Owens
EER	LPP History -- Review existing approaches and techniques that allow effective student learning and strong student engagement in large-enrollment avenues. (Key learnings as input for Project on Academic Technology).	Faculty
EER	Academic Technology -- Experiment with the use of academic technology to achieve student learning, student engagement and cost savings in a limited and representative number of larger demand General Education courses.	Post
	Staff	Robison Worth

WASC: A New Framework for Accreditation

In response to the changing context of higher education, and to reflect the principles adopted by the Commission for accreditation in the WASC region, the Commission has developed a new framework for accreditation. The elements of this new framework align under the core principles called “Core Commitments” to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness which are embodied significantly by revised Accreditation Standards and a three-stage, sequential institutional review process. Each element is described in the following sections of the *Handbook*. Together these components represent a holistic system and process of review that enable WASC to work collaboratively with institutions in a spirit of ongoing experimentation and mutual learning as defined by the Commission values stated above.

Higher education exists in the United States as a public trust and a public good. It is linked to the improvement of individuals, groups, and society as a whole. It provides the basis for conserving and transmitting the values of society and for reflecting on and identifying needed areas of change. Through research, scholarship and creative activity, institutions of higher education also promote the value of discovery and learning. In offering educational programs, institutions prepare their graduates for productive and meaningful lives as citizens and members of society.

The accrediting process functions to promote and sustain this special role for higher education, while providing assurance to the public that institutions of higher education continue to warrant public trust and support. Accreditation evaluation of institutional resources, structures, practices, and results serves an important role for the higher education community and the public in this context. Yet accreditation is not well understood and is too often considered reactive to external minimal standards.

(WASC Handbook for Accreditation 2001, p.4)

WASC: Organizing Around Core Commitments

To become and remain accredited, each institution is expected to demonstrate that it is committed to developing and sustaining Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness.

Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity:

The institution functions with clear purposes, high levels of institutional integrity, fiscal stability, and organizational structures to fulfill its purposes.

The Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity enables the institution to consider resource issues from a holistic perspective, and to consider capacity as an institutional attribute beyond minimum compliance and a review of assets. Looking at itself through a “lens” of institutional capacity enables the institution to reexamine what it *is* in terms of its capacity to fulfill its aspirations, and to integrate and synthesize findings and recommendations for improvement gained through its self review under Commission Standards. While the Standards provide an opportunity to review institutional performance within a defined area, the framework of institutional capacity allows an institution to explore cross-cutting issues such as whether resources, structures and processes are aligned with the institution’s mission and priorities, and whether there is good evidence of effectiveness in their actual deployment. An important dimension of institutional capacity reflected in the Institutional Review cycle is the institution’s potential to define and sustain educational effectiveness.

Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness:

The institution evidences clear and appropriate educational objectives and design at the institutional and program level. The institution employs processes of review, including the collection and use of data, that assure delivery of programs and learner accomplishments at a level of performance appropriate for the degree or certificate awarded.

The Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness provides an opportunity for the institution to explore holistically its approaches to educational effectiveness and assess whether institutional systems, such as course and program design, faculty support, and program review are effectively linked to evidence of student learning and are consistent with the educational goals and academic standards of the institution. By design, elements of educational effectiveness were incorporated into all four Commission Standards, so that institutions would explore the relationships between capacity and educational quality and effectiveness. The Accreditation Standards identify key elements of educational effectiveness.

Applying the Standards of Accreditation: One Set of Standards Two Reviews / Two Lenses

The Standards of Accreditation apply to both the Preparatory and Educational Effectiveness Reviews. To assist teams and institutions to understand the relationship of the Standards to each review, we have prepared the following summary. It is intended to highlight major themes in applying the Standards for each review; it does not enumerate all possible applications.

Focus of the Capacity & Preparatory Review: *Capacity* (purposes, integrity, stability, resources, structures, processes, policies)

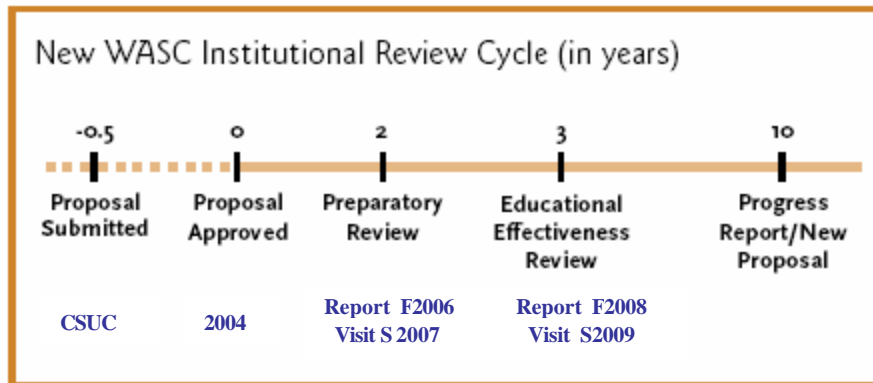
Focus of the Educational Effectiveness Review: *Learning* (educational objectives and design, processes of review, educational results)

Standard One	CPR	Clear sense of who the institution is and where it is going Integrity Diversity
	EER	Institutional learning objectives Indicators of effectiveness Diversity results
Standard Two	CPR	Infrastructure to support learning Outcomes Levels of achievement for graduates Structure for program review Support for scholarship Support for student learning
	EER	Educational results Program review results Co-curricular results Ownership by faculty and discussion of academic standards and student achievement
Standard Three	CPR	Core resources (faculty, staff, finances, library, technology) Organizational structures and decision-making processes
		Appropriate alignment and commitment of resources to support learning Results from planning Environment for learning
Standard Four	CPR	Planning / data / evidence systems
		Engagement of leadership at all levels Quality assurance and quality improvement systems Learning about learning / learning organization

WASC: The Review Process

The new WASC Review Process includes:

- ✍ Institutional Proposal
- ✍ The Capacity and Preparatory Review
- ✍ The Educational Effectiveness Review



The Commission has identified the following outcomes as important for the accreditation review process to serve institutions:

- ✍ The development of and more effective use of indicators of institutional performance and educational effectiveness to support institutional planning and decision making;
- ✍ Greater clarity about the institution's educational objectives and criteria for defining and evaluating those objectives;
- ✍ Improvement of the institution's capacity for self review and of its systems of quality assurance;
- ✍ A deeper understanding of student learning, the development of more varied and effective methods of assessing learning, and the use of the results of this process to improve programs and institutional practices on a continuing basis; and
- ✍ Systematic engagement of the faculty with issues of assessing and improving teaching and learning processes within the institution, and with aligning support systems for faculty more effectively towards this end.

(WASC Handbook for Accreditation 2001, p.36)

WASC Institutional Review Process

The Educational Effectiveness Review

The primary purpose of the Educational Effectiveness Review is to invite sustained engagement by the institution on the extent to which the institution fulfills its educational objectives. The Review is also designed to enable the Commission to make a judgment about the extent to which the institution fulfills its Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness: *The institution evidences clear and appropriate educational objectives and design at the institutional and program levels, and employs processes of review, including the collection and use of data, that assure the delivery of programs and learner accomplishments at a level of performance appropriate for the degree or certificate awarded.*

THE EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REPORT –
Focuses on Core Commitment 2
To Educational Effectiveness—
INCLUDES

- ✍ A description of the Educational Effectiveness approach
- ✍ Deep engagement and analysis of Educational Effectiveness such as:
 - ✍ Several analytical essays (for a Special Themes Model)
 - ✍ A single, extended essay (for a comprehensive or Audit Model)
- ✍ Supporting evidence for the analysis of Educational Effectiveness, building on the Institutional Portfolio prepared for the Preparatory Review
- ✍ An Integrative Component

Exclusive of exhibits and appendices, the Educational Effectiveness Report should not exceed **50 pages** in length. (Further details may be found in Handbook 2001, pages 45-47).

WASC: Focusing on Educational Effectiveness

Articulating a Collective Vision of Educational Attainment. Centers on the degree to which the institution sets goals and obtains results for student learning at both the institutional and program levels that are:

- ✍ clearly stated and widely understood;
- ✍ appropriate for the type and level of the degree or credential offered; and
- ✍ adequately assessed to ascertain mastery of these levels.

Organizing for Learning. Centers on the alignment of appropriate institutional assets and characteristics with the goal of producing high levels of student learning, consistent with the mission of the institution, including:

- ✍ curriculum, pedagogy, and method of delivery;
- ✍ faculty recruitment, development, scholarship in support of improved teaching and learning, rewards, and incentives;
- ✍ organizational structures and processes;
- ✍ information resources and planning capacity;
- ✍ student services and co-curricular activities; and
- ✍ resources and facilities.

Becoming a Learning Organization. Centers on the degree to which the institution has developed systems—to assess its own performance and to use information to improve student learning over time—that:

- ✍ are systematic and regular;
- ✍ reinforce a climate of inquiry throughout the institution;
- ✍ reflect the input of stakeholders and an awareness of the distinctive characteristics of its students;
- ✍ identify key dimensions of performance that include student learning; and
- ✍ are based on standards of evidence that prominently feature educational results.

WASC on the Educational Effectiveness Review¹ (EER)

- ✍ The primary purpose of the Educational Effectiveness Review is to invite sustained engagement by the institution on the extent to which the institution fulfills its educational objectives.
- ✍ Specific purposes of the Educational Effectiveness review include:
 - ✍ To review the design and results of instructional efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs.
 - ✍ To examine institutional practices for evaluating student learning and develop and share good practices in using educational results to improve the process of teaching and learning.
 - ✍ To examine the alignment of institutional resources with activities designed to achieve the institution's educational objectives; and
 - ✍ To promote sustained engagement with selected issues of Educational Effectiveness consistent with Commission Standards. The institution is encouraged to select issues of importance to itself in this process, so the Review will have maximum local utility. (p.45)
- ✍ It is expected that the faculty will be deeply involved in the design and implementation of the Educational Effectiveness Review Report and review process, as well as others in the institution connected to the issues of Educational Effectiveness.
- ✍ The Educational Review Process is intended to enable institutions to explore topics or themes that are related to the institution's own priorities and needs, with a special emphasis on the assessment and improvement of student learning.
- ✍ The Commission Standards, especially Standards 2 and 4, serve as a frame for selecting topics to be examined in the course of the Educational Effectiveness Review. The format of the EE Review Report will therefore vary significantly based upon institutional context and model for review agreed upon through the Proposal Review Process.

¹ From Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, *Handbook of Accreditation*, January 2001, pp. 44 - 49.

What does WASC mean by Educational Effectiveness?

(From Workshop on the Educational Effectiveness Review, WASC Annual Meeting 2004)

A system of quality assurance (intentional, holistic, aligned) for student and organizational learning that demonstrates:

- Leadership focus
- Educational objectives and outcomes at all levels
- Educational infrastructure
- Faculty responsibility
- Culture of inquiry and evidence
- Assessment of student learning
- Reflection and action plans based on results of assessment
- Program review
- Consistent attainment of learning results

A system of quality assurance for student and organizational learning that demonstrates (selected sample CFRs)

- Institutional & leadership focus (CFR 1.1, 1.3, 4.6)
- Appropriate educational objectives for degree programs and institution (CFR 1.1, 1.2, 1.6, 2.4)
- Learning outcomes are widely shared and reflected in academic programs and policies (CFR 1.7, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4)
- Faculty takes collective responsibility for demonstrating and reviewing attainment of those expectations (CFR 2.4, 2.6)
- A culture of inquiry and evidence is well established and evidence is used regularly for improvement (CFR 4.1, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7)
- Action steps and planning use evidence to align improvement w/institutional goals and priorities (CFR 4.2)
- Infrastructure to support educational effectiveness (CFR 2.3, 2.8, 2.13, 2.14. Standard 3)
- Evidence that graduates consistently achieve stated levels of attainment (CFR 2.6)
- Program review to improve curriculum and ensure student learning (CFR 2.7, 4.4)
- Leadership and stakeholders (alumni, employers, practitioners, etc.) are involved in Educational Effectiveness (CFR 4.6, 4.8)
- Organizational learning systems are well established and operate effectively with demonstrable results (CFR 4.1, 4.5, 4.7)
- Ongoing, regular collection and use of evidence to assure program delivery and learner accomplishments (CFR 2.6)

CSUC Promises for its Educational Effectiveness Review

Staging of Preparatory and Educational Effectiveness Reviews

In the Institutional Proposal, CSU, Chico outlined the following:

The Preparatory and Educational Effectiveness Reviews will be conducted within the framework of Chico's vision and mission statements and its strategic plan. Accordingly, we will review in-depth selected aspects of the five strategic priorities identified in Chico's *Strategic Plan for the Future*. (p. 5).

The Educational Effectiveness Review (EER)

Following an iterative series of discussions by campus stakeholders and decision makers, CSU, Chico outlined the following themes for the research programs to be undertaking under the EER:

"The vision, mission, and strategic priorities of CSU, Chico served as the framework for the selection of the following areas of emphasis to be examined in the course of this Educational Effectiveness Review:

- ✍ The Nature of Student Engagement at a Residential Campus.
- ✍ The Refinement of the Academic Program Review.
- ✍ The Innovative Use of Technology in the Delivery of Effective General Education Offerings.² (p. 7).

The Nature of Student Engagement at a Residential Campus

CSU, Chico sees its unique residential situation as an opportunity to create an intensive, high quality learning environment both in and outside the classroom. The underlying belief is that such learning environments foster improved student learning. CSU, Chico chooses to use the EER as a means of systematically validating these beliefs. (p. 7).

The Refinement of the Academic Program Review

Program review processes play a key role in the improvement of undergraduate education at CSU, Chico. Such reviews have the potential to systematize a program's approach to academic quality and educational excellence. They provide a framework for quality management in our program offerings and other educational activities. Accordingly, we propose to refine our Five-Year Program Review processes as part of the EER. (p. 8)

² For details see: <http://www.csuchico.edu/vpaa/vppra/wasc/instProposal.html>

The Innovative Use of Technology in the Delivery of Effective General Education Offerings

The Report on the Comprehensive Site Visit of CSU, Chico noted that “information and technology are keys to CSU, Chico’s future and the Learning-Centered Campus” and included an appendix entitled “*Role of Information Technology at CSU, Chico in 2006.*” Both the report and the appendix foreshadowed many of the issues Chico has faced since the visit. Of particular interest here is the question: “*What Implications Does This New Information Infrastructure Have For General Education Reform and Vice Versa?*” The projected state of funding for the CSU in general and CSU, Chico in particular and concomitant concerns about educational quality has increased the urgency and relevance of that question. We propose to explore academic technology as a means for leveraging faculty and student efforts, especially in the area of general education where the need for greater efficacy with fewer resources is most critical. (p. 9)

WASC Responses to CSUC Promises

Correspondence from WASC to CSU, Chico includes the following instructions, comments, questions and / or suggestions that should be incorporated in our management of the CPR and EER projects:

June 24, 2003

- ✍ “... Several reviewers wished for more detail with regard to any improvement in the University’s climate for minority students.”
- ✍ “... the University’s assessment programs appeared to need considerable development; in particular, the reviewers did not see evidence of the use of assessment data in actual program planning.” (The reviewers here are the reviewers of the March 2000 report.)
- ✍ “... becoming a learning-centered campus, will have been a campus strategic goal for about six years by the time of the Preparatory Review, ...it makes good sense for you to conduct an ‘audit’ of assessment activities as part of that review.”
- ✍ “For the Educational Effectiveness Review, related to this, you might wish to demonstrate your capacity for assessment by presenting several ‘case studies’ of assessment initiatives that show your established mechanisms for translating assessment information into actual programmatic change. For this demonstration, you may wish to include not only long-established assessment initiatives, but also new initiatives for which the need was identified in your assessment audit for the Preparatory Review.”
- ✍ “With regard to your fourth strategic priority ... I see a strong opportunity to continue your engagement with the issue of minority enrollment and your campus climate for minority students. The 2000 reviewers saw progress in this area, but saw your challenges as continuing. For the **Preparatory Review**, of course, you will present a broad, multi-issue description of your efforts to serve your target population. For the **Educational Effectiveness**, however, you might consider doing an in-depth presentation on this particular issue.”

November 24, 2003

- ✍ “The University has selected three integral and challenging themes to explore in the Educational Effectiveness Review. The Committee encourages the University to pursue these themes as scholarly research inquiries, including the framing of questions and the examination and evaluation of student learning results and outcomes where appropriate.” (p. 3). (*The notion has been repeatedly offered that we view the projects as on-going research programs*).

- ✍ “The Committee was particularly impressed with the plans for a performance measurement system around the strategic plan of the University and how that might be incorporated into the review process.”
- ✍ The Committee was intrigued by your self description as a learning organization, and wondered if you could say more about what that means to you conceptually.
- ✍ The Committee would like to see more of how the Preparatory Review will reflect on University challenges to maintain quality in an era of reduced resources.

March 15, 2004

- ✍ “The success of the Proposal would seem to depend on active leadership and broad engagement of the faculty, with wide dissemination of results for further faculty discussion.” *The notion of faculty engagement has been a recurring theme in many of the WASC materials. Indeed, each standard and criterion for review has associated with it so-called Questions for Institutional Engagement.*
- ✍ The second issue identified by the Panel is that of support to under-represented minorities and improvement of campus climate for all students, given the recommendations from the last Commission action letter.

EER Project Management

The Proposal Review Committee encouraged us “to pursue these themes as scholarly research inquiries, including the framing of questions and the examination and evaluation of student learning results and outcomes where appropriate.” Indeed, WASC, in general, repeatedly advanced the notion that EER projects be viewed as on-going research programs. Accordingly, each of the eight projects subsumed under the three themes is to be developed as a research program that includes:

- ✍ the formulation of research questions (*sample research questions on following page*),
- ✍ the operationalization of research variables,
- ✍ the collection of data on the research variables,
- ✍ the analysis of the data collected,
- ✍ a discussion of the study results for action implications,
- ✍ the distribution of study results, and
- ✍ the design and implementation of action plans.

Once implemented, action plans will be subjected to the same research cycle to establish that improvement, if any, was accomplished.