

**REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM
EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW
TO CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO**

November 30, 2004

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Reaffirmation of Accreditation**

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SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

Description of Institution and Visit

California State University, Fresno (Fresno State University), dating back to 1911 (known as the Fresno State Normal School), is a major public university serving California's central San Joaquin Valley. The move to its current site took place in the mid 1950s, and the current name, California State University, Fresno, dates from 1972. The institution is located approximately 185 miles southeast of San Francisco and 220 miles north of Los Angeles in the heart of the richest agricultural valley in the world.

Fresno State University is part of the 23-campus California State University (CSU) system, the largest state university system in the nation. The University is situated on 1470 acres, 74 percent of which are devoted to agriculture-cropland, orchards, vineyards, farm animal facilities and laboratory and research facilities. Recent construction at the core of location includes the Music Building, the Education building, the Smittcamp Alumni House, and the Atrium. The Downing Planetarium and the State Crime lab constitute beginning elements of the Fresno State Science Center. Newly constructed in the Science Center are a planetarium-affiliated science museum and a major new classroom-office building, Science II. Also planned for this area are a number of other buildings, including a Science Partners' building. With the construction of Science II, the last of six "temporary" buildings dating from 1968 will be removed. Classrooms and laboratories have undergone regular renovation and modification. These efforts include, in particular, modifications to better accommodate persons with

disabilities and to incorporate new technological resources that bring state of the art capabilities to instruction.

Fresno State University has evolved over the past 93 years to its present 2004 enrollment of more than 21,000 students, where almost one out of four students is enrolled in a post-baccalaureate or graduate program. The University awarded approximately 3,500 degrees in the 2003-04 academic year. Two thirds of the students come to the institution from high schools and community colleges in the five surrounding counties, with 33 to 40 percent coming from within Fresno and Clovis proper. A high level of diversity is apparent among the student body. Entering fall 2003 freshman self-selected their ethnicity as the following: 42% Caucasian, 32% Hispanic, 17.5% Asian, and 8.5% African-American. These percentages show minor changes from 2001 entering freshmen with a 1.5% decrease in Asians and a 1.5% increase in African-Americans. The institution employs 1295 faculty; 608 are tenured and tenure track, 595 are part time lecturers, and 92 are full time lecturers. Ninety-six percent of the tenured faculty hold a doctoral or other terminal degrees in their areas of study. Percentage of ethnicity is somewhat consistent, by demographic, between lecturer and tenure/tenure track faculty. There are minor shifts since the Preparatory Review Statistics with the percentage totals remaining nearly steady. Previous percentages are shown in:

<u>Lecturer-FT</u>	<u>Lecturer-PT</u>	<u>Tenure/TT</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>
0.0% (1.6%)	0.8% (0.6%)	0.3% (0.2%)	American Indian 0.5% Total
5.4% (9.4%)	7.2% (6.7%)	11.0%	Asian 8.9% Total

7.6% (3.1%)	3.0% (1.1%)	3.6% (3.2%)	Black
			2.9% (2.8%) Total
6.5% (8.7%)	7.6 %	8.9% (8.6%)	Hispanic
			8.1% (8.2%) Total
78.3% (74.0%)	78.5% (78.1%)	74.3% (75.5%)	White
			76.5% (76.0%) Total

The campus has a relatively traditional organizational structure with a President and four Vice Presidents. The President of the institution is Dr. John D. Welty, who took office in July 1991.

In 2001-2002, Fresno State University received a total of \$167 million in general funds, consisting of over \$130 million in base allocation and over \$36 million in revenues and reimbursements, primarily fees and tuition. In addition, grants, contracts, and private donations reach over \$60 million per year, providing 25% to 30% of the total university budget. All basic university functions are funded from the general funds.

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), as a regional accreditation agency, accredits Fresno State University as a regional comprehensive university at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The University offers 54 baccalaureate degrees and 41 master’s degree programs, 7 certificates of advanced study, and 1 joint doctoral program in Educational leadership with UC Davis. The institution has 37 nationally accredited departmental programs.

The departments offering these degrees exist in eight schools and colleges:

- College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology
- College of Arts and Humanities

- Craig School of Business
- Kremen School of Education and Human Development
- College of Engineering and Computer Science
- College of Health and Human Services
- College of Science and Mathematics
- College of Social Sciences

A strong sense of academic shared governance exists throughout the campus. This is embedded in the Constitution of the Academic Assembly, of which the Academic Senate is the representative body. Provisions defining rights and responsibilities have been drawn from multiple sources, foremost of which are the State legislature, the CSU Board of Trustees, and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). The California Higher Education Employer-Employees Relations Act (HEERA) recognized consultation and joint decision making between administration and faculty.

Recent initiatives undertaken by the campus community include the following: Honors Programs, Faculty Transformation, Community-Campus Interactions, Assessment, Diversity, Academic Technology, Joint Doctoral Degrees, Decentralization, New Focus on Athletics, and non-state support.

Fresno State University accreditation visits and communications began in 1953, continuing through October 2004. The last comprehensive visit occurred in November 1993. In March 1994, WASC acted to reaffirm accreditation and to schedule the next comprehensive visit for fall 2001. In April 1999 the staff requested to move the site visit

from fall 2001 to fall 2003. In November 2003, the five-member Preparatory Review team visited the campus. The detailed report of that visit was submitted to WASC in January 2004. In March 2004, the Commission acted to continue the accreditation of Fresno State University and to proceed with the Education Effectiveness visit on October 20-22, 2004.

The Preparatory Review focused on the theme of “A Learning Community: Opportunity, Exploration, and Interaction.” Following the review, the University was “urged to develop clear institutional learning goals and objective and focus its attention on the development of such goals so that assessment of student learning outcomes and program effectiveness can be anchored in the core values of the institution.”

(Commission Action Letter, March 3, 2004) The review team, and the Commission, cited four specific areas for further review during the Educational Effectiveness Review:

1. strategic planning-realigning current strategic planning with the results and outcomes of assessment work to stay current with reexamined educational priorities and emphases, and with the capital campaign;
2. expectations for faculty-engage the faculty in understanding expectations of research for the various faculty ranks, and monitor the implications of faculty expectations and workload;
3. exploring new program modalities-refining requests to offer more site-based and technology-based programs inside and outside the regions,

including international programs, including evidence of educational effectiveness and quality assurance for existing programs;

4. university response to NCAA Issues-an update and progress report.

This report is an account of the final visit for the Educational Effectiveness Review and as the summation for the re-accreditation process. Five of the team members arrived on campus Wednesday morning, October 20 and concluded the visit on October 22, following the team leader's private meeting with the President and an open campus forum.

During this two day visit, the team met with multiple constituencies of the University: the President, the Provost, the WASC Self-Study Steering Committee, the Dean, seven department representatives, the Student Success Task Force, representatives of the Faculty Mentoring Program, Research Faculty, Probationary Faculty, Research Students, the Personnel Committee and Academic Personnel, the University Advisory Board, the Strategic Planning Committee, Leadership of the Comprehensive Campaign, Student Affairs Leadership, Service Learning representatives, and representatives of the Athletic Department. The team also attended a well-presented and successful University Expo.

Quality of the Educational Effectiveness Presentation and Alignment with the Proposal

The team felt that the Presentation and the alignment of Presentation to the Institutional Proposal were of high quality. The Presentation reflected the institution's core values and commitment to excellence. The team praises the institution for the

candid and forthright approach it pursued throughout the Presentation. The overall quality and organization of the Institutional Presentation and the supporting Portfolio were clear and consistent. The Educational Effectiveness Review Report accurately reflects the state of the institution at the time of this team's visit.

As with the Preparatory Review, though the data and exhibits selected by the institution in the Presentation were generally thorough, there were some inconsistencies. Substantial data were presented but analyses of data and conclusions were absent from the presentation. In instances where problems were presented, such as "resistance to assessment", solutions were absent. In some circumstances, consistency of data, such as high scores on first year remediation vis-à-vis the low faculty assessment of student preparedness, is not explained nor analyzed. The alignment of data with institutional goals will further the university's progress and processes.

Preparatory Review Update

The team felt that the Educational Effectiveness Review Report responded well to the issues raised as a result of the Preparatory Review. Several key issues were identified for further inquiry during the site visit:

- updated information on the assessment of General Education, including results to date, University wide learning goals, the gap between faculty expectation and student realities, and the progress of all departments in preparing direct measures of learning outcomes;

- expectations of faculty, particularly the status of junior faculty and research requirements, including the impact of greater research expectations on classroom teaching;
- effectiveness of academic support services;
- university response to NCAA issues;
- linking emerging strategic planning goals with the capital campaign;
- the re-institution of periodic program reviews and the inclusion of assessment data in the reviews.

There were no new major issues raised between the Preparatory Review and the Educational Effectiveness Review.

SECTION II - EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Evaluation of the Institution's Educational Effectiveness Inquiry

The thematic approach of the Educational Effectiveness Review Report served as the basis for the team's use of the Standards of Accreditation for pre-visit review and analysis, the on-site visit, and this evaluation report. Thus, the standards are the focus of the evaluation of the institution's inquiry.

STANDARD I - DEFINING INSTITUTIONAL PURPOSES AND ENSURING EDUCATIONAL (including Institutional Integrity)

Fresno State University's vision is to be one of the nation's premier interactive universities, recognized for quality teaching, transformational scholarship, and cultural

leadership for the benefit of society. Paraphrasing the guiding mission, established 21 years ago, the institution seeks to provide the following:

- Educational opportunities at the Bachelor, Master, and Doctoral levels;
- A strong general education program;
- Undergraduate liberal arts and professional programs;
- Quality graduate programs;
- Quality teaching;
- Opportunities for students to develop civic engagement skills;
- Educational access, with special attention to the needs of under-represented students;
- Service to the San Joaquin Valley.

Institutional Mission and Integrity

The institution is commended for recognizing ways to maintain the integrity of its mission and vision. The administration, faculty, staff, and students have a deep understanding that it's teaching, civic engagement, and co-curricular activities are focused on the improvement of the campus and surrounding communities. As the institution continues its growth and focuses on creating clearer standards and benchmarks, the Accreditation team recommends that its mission remain constant and in the fore of future activities.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is an integral part of the definition of institutional purposes and of ensuring educational objectives. The long term WASC Self-Study Steering Committee sought to engage all constituents of the institution in the strategic planning process. The Committee, collaborating with the Accreditation Steering Team, organized the institution's goals around the three thematic areas of the Review Report: Opportunity, Exploration, and Interaction. This decade long process has yielded measurable results in areas of: 1) access to quality programs for diverse populations; 2) discovery of knowledge, self and society through expanding horizons; and 3) transformation through integration of knowledge and experience. These are woven throughout the Educational Effectiveness Review Report. Though the strategic planning language seems to have become part of the campus vocabulary, organizational fatigue around the process is present. The campus needs more clarification around "continuous improvement" and "strategic planning." Many on the campus feel that strategic planning is about moving forward without necessarily assessing the present and the past, whereas "continuous improvement" makes the iterative process of assessment the foundation for changes in the status quo. It is recommended that the campus use its Educational Effectiveness Review Document to reflect on the assessment that has occurred, to help with continuous improvement and to be part of future strategic planning.

The timing is propitious for strategic planning in Academic Affairs. The following new key positions lend themselves to the inception of strategic planning: the

permanent provost, three new deans, a new permanent director of an expanded Institutional Research Office, the proposal of reorganization of the assessment, academic computing, and teaching and learning centers. As Academic Affairs pursues its strategic planning, it is recommended that the mission of the institution and the relationship with the community be kept in the fore of all the planning. In doing this, Academic Affairs will be able to set reasonable and agreed upon outcomes that are aligned with the mission and designed through a “top down” and “bottom up” collaboration.

Diversity

The continuing increase in students from under-represented groups is commendable and commensurate with the institution’s mission. Ideally, there would be a comparable percentage of faculty and of students from under-represented groups. In order to achieve this, Fresno State University will need to intentionally design appropriate strategies for recruiting and retaining faculty from under-represented groups.

The institution is commended for the services that are readily available to students from under-represented groups. These services include, but are not limited to: Faculty Mentoring, Dog Days, Summer Bridge, and the McNair Program. Concern remains why the percentages of students of Latino and African American descent are not increasing.

Service-learning and Serving the Region

The institution continues to focus on ways to best form mutually beneficial and mutually reciprocal relationships with community partners. It is evident that these activities will have a life-long affect on Fresno State University students while

concurrently providing wonderful services for the Fresno community. The intentionality for community outreach from multiple pockets throughout the campus is applauded. It is recommended that the institution continue to explore the possibility of creating a central service learning office that serves to broker, coordinate, document, and assess the service learning. The University reports that the office of Civic Engagement and Students for Community Service is the central service-learning office. However, the team supports a project that is in the works to establish an Office of Community Based Learning that would also help coordinate and assess other service activities, volunteerism, internships, etc. This may reduce redundancy across locations and partnerships, raise awareness of the myriad community-university partnerships that exist, and act as a gateway or front door to the community.

Research and Scholarship

Aligning research and scholarship expectations with the mission and vision of the institution is necessary. As Academic Affairs undergoes its strategic planning process, there will be opportunities for the upper administration to identify what level and type of research institution Fresno State University strives to be. This will provide a blueprint for faculty to follow and reduce anxieties about expectations.

Junior faculty, in particular, express some anxiety about what research activities are considered quality scholarship for purposes of personnel evaluation, and how much of this scholarship is necessary. It is quite clear that quality teaching remains a priority and that each faculty member should participate in some university service. However, the

expectation of continued research and scholarship is still uneven. Faculty expressed a desire for mentoring in areas of scholarship, navigating the political system and infrastructure, in balancing their time and workload, and in grant pursuit and administration.

Balancing Faculty Workload & Mentoring

In general, faculty expressed a need for a more balanced workload. While faculty reductions in course load are not uncommon, several junior faculty were not aware that there are opportunities to negotiate their full-time teaching responsibilities. These discussions should occur early in their academic career with qualified and knowledgeable mentors and department chairs.

Junior faculty would benefit from mentoring in areas of balancing faculty workload between teaching, scholarship, and service. Though faculty realize that teaching is of primary importance at Fresno State University, there remains that need in junior faculty to have a clearer understanding of how to meet the departmental and administrative expectations in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and service. Boyer's model was cited several times, though there was little common understanding as to what exactly Boyer's model meant to faculty who were trying to teach well, publish and participate in service to the institution and the community.

STANDARD TWO: ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES THROUGH CORE FUNCTIONS

There is significance evidence that Fresno State University is achieving its educational objectives through the core functions of teaching and learning, scholarship

and creative activity, and support for student learning. Through the Student Outcomes Assessment Planning process (SOAP), most departments have established a range of viable assessment activities and many appear to be using the results of assessment quite productively. The team was provided multiple examples of how program effectiveness is being assessed and several examples of how curriculum has been altered thoughtfully in response to identified weaknesses. In these model departments, there was expressed appreciation for the ongoing process of evaluation and improvement. A concern for student learning was clearly evident. In these departments there is every indication that a culture of evidence has been established, which will continue productively to inform curricular planning.

However, a review of the WASC Table 7.1, Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators in the Educational Effectiveness Review Report, and also the Deans' annual reports, indicate that not all departments are equally far along in the assessment process. It is incumbent on the Deans to identify those departments that are lagging and to assure continuing engagement. Because the number of responsive departments appears to be substantial, it may be possible and desirable to pair those departments having difficulties developing their process for assessing student learning with model departments.

The departments with whom we spoke did not express any difficulty in obtaining the data necessary for assessment, but the assessment of academic support activities has been encumbered by the vicissitudes of the new student record system and a loss of data

in the transfer of student records onto it. In some instances reliable comparative data is not available (for special admits, for example). The Student Success Task Force, and particularly the leadership in the area of academic support, is clearly aware of the shortcomings of the system and eager to modify or augment it to allow more accurate assessment of campus sub-cultures. The commitment of the Student Success Task Force, which works to assure development and coordination of co-curricular support of student learning, is palpable and signals that a ready response to ongoing challenges is in place on the campus.

The assessment of General Education remains a work in progress. The recent review of syllabi, undertaken by the General Education Task Force, has raised concern that a number of courses certified for GE may not be meeting the standards currently in place for such courses. Revised standards are before the Academic Senate and will require additional review and, perhaps, the withdrawal of GE approval in some instances. The decision to focus the study of GE effectiveness on writing initially and then expand it to reading, appears to be a reasonable one under the circumstances, and marks progress in the committee's deliberations. The assessment of General Education, more broadly conceived, remains a challenge. How the goals for General Education ought to be aligned with the project to identify the Qualities of the California State University, Fresno Graduate (page 211 of the Educational Effectiveness Review Report) and how these institutional goals will be assessed is unclear. The survey cited on page 85 has launched the campus conversation and there is good reason to expect that the General Education

Committee will give the matter serious attention this year. The Provost has indicated that the General Education Committee understands fully its responsibility and the recent stabilization of the leadership of the committee gives good reason for optimism about eventual progress on all these GE assessment issues.

A high percentage of lower-division GE courses are taught by part-time faculty. The committee was told that some part-time faculty do not seem to understand general education expectations, particularly the focus on learning outcomes. Whether or how the relative absence of regular faculty threatens the academic integrity of the GE program requires attention and discussion. Whatever the outcome of the discussion, it remains incumbent on the departments and deans to assure that the part-time faculty are appropriately integrated into the conversation about the educational effectiveness of general education.

The retirement of the Director of Institutional Research, challenges the campus in its institutional research efforts and this challenge has been clearly recognized. The decision to search aggressively for a qualified replacement to whom the campus will be able to look for specialized knowledge and skills in assessment. In addition, the campus will hire an additional data analyst to work in the area of assessment.

Two other measures of educational effectiveness particularly impressed the review committee. The student projects and internships featured in the University Expo on the second day of the team visit, suggested a high level of engagement on the part of students and impressive integration of student learning with the wider research and

outreach mission of the University. Conversation with the participants in these learning experiences revealed pride in their personal accomplishments and strong appreciation for the University's role in the community. The team commends the institution on its plan to expand upon the audience, including the community, and continue the Expo idea on a regular basis. Speaking on behalf of the community, the University Advisory Board members interviewed, rated the educational effectiveness of the institution favorably, while signaling a realistic understanding of the challenges encountered in terms of student preparation.

STANDARD THREE: DEVELOPING AND APPLYING RESOURCES AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY

We commend the University for its efforts generally to align its resources with its institutional purposes and educational objectives. The University remains committed to, and appears excited about, launching a major capital campaign. As President Welty has said to the Advisory Board, "the State will fund a mediocre university but not greatness," and the upcoming campaign is seen as a vital source of future support. There appears to be recognition that clear priorities must be established for the campaign, linked to the directions laid out in the strategic plan (whose objectives have now been wisely reduced from more than thirty down to six). There appear to be different perceptions of the campaign's likely target; we heard a wide range of different figures. This uncertainty may reflect the fact that a feasibility study has not yet been conducted; it is scheduled for the coming Spring. We found evidence that an unrealistic expectation of immediate cash

returns from the campaign, usable for program support, still persists in some quarters, although significantly less than last year.

With the appointment of a permanent Provost, some of the administrative positions in Academic Affairs are being shuffled in order to better support current priorities. It has proved possible to resurrect the position of Dean of Undergraduate Studies, while achieving a net reduction of 1½ in the overall number of administrators. The hiring of a new Institutional Research Director will fill an important need, although we are concerned that some may have unrealistic expectations of the new individual's ability, not only to advise on assessment, but also to carry it out.

We were told that, throughout the budget cuts, the Provost has protected most, though not all, of the key sources of funding which support civic engagement. This, and the President's frequent public references to civic engagement, confirm the high priority that the University places on it.

There seems to be no ambiguity about the fact that increased emphasis is being placed on research, scholarship, and creative activities, reflecting what the Strategic Plan calls "a shift in orientation (of the university) from a teaching community to a community of learners." The commitment to research (using this term, as the report does, to denote various types of scholarship) seems to be welcomed by most, though not all, of the current faculty. There has been a huge turnover of faculty (about 40 percent) during the past few years, with more expected in the near future. We were told by a member of the

WASC Self-Study Steering Committee that faculty members recruited during the past ten years “are 100 percent committed to research.”

It is not clear that the rationale for the shift to research has been fully articulated or that the goal has been well defined. Like other changes of emphasis in complex organizations like a University, the movement toward more applied research expectations for faculty needs to be continuously explained and better understood throughout the faculty.

The increased emphasis on research has been reflected in probationary plans for new faculty and in some budget priorities (technology upgrades, library materials, intramural grants). Forty-nine centers and institutes provide a significant amount of technical assistance and support. However, from both established and probationary faculty we heard mixed reviews of the infrastructure and availability of support (e.g., assigned time and travel funds), which appear to be uneven from one college to another. One faculty member complained that research is conducted “out of hours and on one’s own dime.” Another complained that the Contracts and Grants office helps with budget but not much else. For a few, information about what it takes to manage a grant appeared to be lacking. On the other hand some faculty members seemed reasonably content with the level of support provided.

Consistent with the finding reported in the Educational Effectiveness Report, the biggest concern of faculty in general seems to be that of excessive workload and inadequate time for research. In some colleges, assigned time and other support for

research seem to be more readily available than in others, which some faculty perceive as the result of inequitable resource allocation by the University; however, it may also reflect conscious reallocation decisions within the colleges and departments themselves (e.g., one department pointed out that it has chosen to keep faculty positions open in order to release funds for research).

Probationary faculty commented that the research expectations in their probationary plans are typically less than those found at research universities and are usually achievable, although they pointed to marked disparities between different departments.

Some voiced the concern that too little time is given for plan preparation. Because the plans are due in October of their first term at the University, there is insufficient time to personalize these documents. Furthermore, some felt that the University's template is too constraining, whereas others felt that their departments allowed them more freedom to individualize. It is recommended the University either extend the plan preparation beyond October, or share the plan preparation requirement with new faculty prior to their arrival on campus. Either way, new faculty would have more time to complete the plan.

The integration of technology into the learning environment appears to be making progress, although the source of needed future funding remains uncertain. The impact of technology on teaching and learning is yet to be assessed. The University seems to be willing to take risks in this area and to make improvements based on what it learns; for

example, in the administrative area, a decision to abandon altogether the printed course schedule in favor of an on-line version was reversed after considerable negative reaction was received.

STANDARD FOUR: CREATING AN ORGANIZATION COMMITTED TO LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

STRATEGIC THINKING AND PLANNING

Individuals at all levels of the campus perceive their institution as having a unique role in a changing community. The commitment to the unique role of the institution within that community appears to be widely shared by the academic community at large, and by almost all individuals and committees with whom we met.

The community's stable and successful past and future are consistent with the mission of the University, which is to provide the highest quality university education in support of the local community, which radiates 100 miles in all directions. There is a strong emphasis on practical applications of knowledge, on educating students, many of whom are the first in their families to attend college, and on providing a center of knowledge and motivation for the greater Fresno region.

The team notes the strong sense of mission that is understood and accepted by much of the academic community, evidenced by enthusiasm and commitment at all levels of the academic community. There is a high level of mutual support among individuals within departments, and between the administration and the faculty. Although faculty are feeling pressures of time, money, and personnel which are addressed elsewhere, the departments interviewed exuded a sense of excitement about what they were doing

individually and as a group, and this excitement was more dominant than the practical pressures.

Many faculty members attribute their freedom to be creative and enthusiastic to the atmosphere of support given by the President, who, along with department chairs, and others, encourages innovative activities and projects. More than one stated that if an individual wanted to do a new project badly enough, the rest of the department and the chair would support his or her creative activity. In short, the core leadership is capable, committed, and well-respected campus wide.

The twelve-member Advisory Board is particularly enthusiastic about President Welty and the mission of the college. This board is comprised of community leaders and professionals, many of them CSU Fresno graduates. They commend President Welty for actively seeking information from a wide variety of sources and for listening carefully to what those sources say before making decision: “John can listen, even to what he doesn’t want to hear.” They perceive the University to be the “spiritual, educational, and mental center of the community.” They are very proud of this mission and of their advisory role: “The timing couldn’t be better—Fresno is just being discovered.”

A Newly Articulated Goal

Academic research at Fresno State University is either the introduction of a new goal or the intensification of a previously less emphasized goal. This becomes an interesting question for the University because of the strongly-held belief that teaching takes prominence over research at the institution. Some faculty stated that they had

chosen Fresno State University because of its emphasis on teaching and that they now felt that that was changing on them. Several of the departments interviewed, however, have emphasized research all along, due in part to their meeting professional accreditation standards or to the nature of their discipline, and they expressed a lack of concern over the research issue.

It is clear that both the President's Office and the Provost's Office, are in strong agreement about the introduction or intensification of the goal of research. Thus, the campus must address several issues: 1) what is the effect on teaching of the increased emphasis on research; 2) does the core leadership agree among themselves upon what level of research will meet the University's goal; 3) is there a clear distinction between applied and theoretical research, especially since many faculty believe that applied research is more appropriate for the institution, given its mission and history; 4) how can the role that research will play in the faculty's advancement through the institutional academic ranks be clarified. At present, the academic administration has in place a new plan that clarifies the criteria for academic promotion. This plan involves a written agreement between the faculty and the University that functions much like an annual progress contract. Such progress is already in place for tenure review and the before mentioned academic plan for promotion should help significantly to reduce faculty concerns in this area.

The team's perception is that the discussion about the research goal was less about the value of elevating the requirement for research and more about the lack of

clarity regarding what kind of research would be required, how that would enhance the mission, and how that would affect the existing duties and commitments of the faculty.

The team concludes that the excellence and the uniqueness of Fresno State University lies in its seemingly universal commitment to teaching, and especially to its support of the community's students, whose lives are being altered in a positive way by the commitment of the University. The team hopes that the University does not forget the unique teaching mission that they have accomplished so well.

Alignment of Priorities and Resources

As noted previously, there is a concern with the fatigue or over-extension of the faculty. The several possible causes include the relationship to research expectations; the teaching load, which is consistent with the CSU system, with an average load of eight courses a year with three to five preparations; and the time and efforts necessary to complete the multi-year WASC reaccreditation requirements. A further source, however, is related to the question of priorities and their relation to resources. There is a remarkable level of good-will on the campus among leaders and faculty alike. This leads to faculty members willfully taking on more and more service responsibilities in order to move the University forward even in difficult budgetary times. This eventually could take its toll either in faculty burn-out or in the quality of the new initiatives. Both the President and the Provost are aware of this. Since the Preparatory Visit, they have addressed this issue positively by reducing the number of strategic initiatives from thirty-eight to six.

This tightly focused set of strategic initiatives is more consistent with the resources available to the University as well. There was strong concern among the team about the upcoming financial goal of the Comprehensive Campaign, based upon both the comparative size of the goals of prior campaigns and the underlying foundation for running such a campaign. In particular, it seemed as if the various offices that would be responsible for such a campaign would more likely be successful if they were further along with the foundational structure of their departments, e.g. staffing, a history of alumni giving, and a feasibility study. It is important that the executive-level administration, the Strategic Planning Committee, and the Development Office work closely together to prevent over-extension of resources (human and fiscal) in this exciting time of growth for the University.

Appropriately Defined and Analyzed Qualitative and Quantitative Data

While there has been progress in the gathering of data for the assessment purposes, the progress has been uneven. The team concluded from its study of the data reports and its visits with the individuals, committees, and departments on the campus, that there are three causes involved in the unevenness of data gathering and analysis: 1) limited training and understanding of data analysis research methods; 2) much data analysis that is at a very basic level; and 3) lack of training in how data can be used to promote the achievement of goals. Once there is a more extensive culture of assessment on the campus, brought about with the changes of a new instructional research staff, it will be more likely that members of the campus community will experience data analysis

as a positive tool toward reaching success, rather than as a threat or a non-productive use of time.

Exploring New Program Modalities

The team looked closely at the new and expanded program modalities of the international programs and the distance-learning programs. Each new program or expanded program requires a fit within the mission, a clarification of its rank within the prioritization of goals, and an analysis of its alignment with the fiscal plan for the university.

Fresno State University has existing distance-learning links with community colleges as well as with other CSU campuses. The programs appear to be consistent with the mission of supporting the needs of the local community and they adhere to the same hourly standards required of traditional courses. The standards of admission are the same as for campus-based students.

In order to ensure a high quality distance-learning program, the distance-learning administrators need to continually monitor the access to the appropriate library resources for the programs offered at a distance. Another concern is the amount and level of staffing at the distant sites. The materials submitted suggest that students have services at the partner institutions. It is important for the distance-learning students to be assimilated into the Fresno State University culture and to be truly earning a Fresno State University degree. The team noted that the on-site courses at the distant campus are taught only by lecturers, not by tenured or tenure track faculty.

The international program is in its early stages of development. Although it has enthusiastic and competent leadership, the program needs to gather together its offerings under one umbrella so that it can be evaluated as a whole while determining its compatibility with the college mission and its place within the college priorities. The international program involves fledgling partnerships with Japan and India as well as university sponsored three-week study trips during the year. The three-week study program, well-planned, energetically coordinated, and professionally taught by senior faculty is popular and financially self-supporting.

The partnership with Japan is designed to offer General Education courses in Japan and then to give those courses transfer credit when the student enrolls at Fresno State University. The usual issues in international educational programs arise for this Japanese program: are the expatriate instructors trained in the delivery of GE so that their courses represent CSU Fresno's GE program; are the on-site instructors who support the web-based courses expatriates or locals and are they trained in the nuances of a General Education program; how effective is language instruction in classes ranging from 50 to 70 students; are the libraries of the Japanese partner-institutions adequate for the support of western-style GE programs?

The India program is in its very early stages: the facility is built, but the technology has not yet been installed. The goals of the program include the increase of the number of qualified students majoring in Engineering at Fresno State University, the globalization of the Fresno State University curriculum, the opportunity for international

student and faculty travel, and the increase of the economic viability of Punjab, India.

The latter goal seems well beyond the mission of Fresno State University as it is currently stated.

COMMITMENT TO LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

Quality Assurance Processes

Institutional research at Fresno State University has not reached the level of excellence consistent with the campus understanding of the mission and goals of the university, the creativity, enthusiasm, and dedication of the faculty, and the skill of the core leadership. As stated previously, many of the faculty members are unfamiliar with the tools required for conducting assessment. It is hoped that the new staffing in institutional research will provide the resources for the campus to achieve a higher level of quality assurance processes.

Periodic Review of Institutional Research

The latest review of institutional research has led to the decision by the President and the Provost to restructure the Office of Institutional Research and provide increased support for high quality institutional research. The faculty expectations for the changes are high and it is important that leadership clarify the role of the Office of Institutional Research and its new organizational structure.

Use of Institutional Research for Improvement

The campus has begun to use institutional research for improvement in a variety of areas. These include the Faculty Mentoring Program and the General Education

Committee and Task Force. There is every reason to believe that the campus will make better use of the Office of Institutional Research under its new structure.

Engagement of Entire Academic Community

There is considerable engagement of the entire academic community from the individual probationary agreements to the Strategic Planning Committee, from the students in the Faculty Mentoring Program to the Advisory Board, from the faculty to the Provost, and from the freshmen to the President. Many plans have been generated during the WASC Evaluation Period. It remains, now, to coordinate those plans within a campus Academic Plan. At the present time, there are many sets of planners and many sets of plans, but no overall Academic Plan. The new Provost is aware of this situation, and has set a goal to create an overall campus Academic Plan.

Engagement of All Appropriate Stakeholders

Fresno State University distinguishes itself by its deep involvement with external stakeholders in the community. According to members of the Advisory Board, the University provides interns and employees for many community businesses and in turn receives feedback from those businesses about the preparation of the students. The Board sees its role as “the eyes and ears” of the University, gathering information from the community and providing input to the community from the University.

Another stakeholder is the adjunct faculty member who is a practitioner in the community. Over the years there have been a large number of adjunct faculty serving the

University. According to the President, currently 55% of the courses are taught by adjuncts. Some of the departmental interviews indicated that full-time faculty consider the adjunct faculty to be of great value to the department in that they introduce cutting edge issues and assessment questions.

SECTION III - SUMMARY OF TEAM CONCLUSIONS AND MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CAPACITY AND PREPARATORY REVIEW AND EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Conclusions

- the visiting team concludes that Fresno State University is a very good institution which is well positioned to take the next steps toward its plan of academic excellence and regional service.
- it is well led by its President and senior staff, including the academic deans and area directors.
- the core leadership of Academic and Student Affairs is clearly evident, and they are committed to program assessment and continuous improvement. Their work is complemented by the good work of the task force on student success.
- leadership at the departmental level could be strengthened by a more explicit and clear articulation of roles and responsibilities.
- the outstanding faculty is well qualified and highly dedicated. They are beloved and admired by both undergraduate and graduate students.
- the students love their institution and believe that they are getting a fine education.
- the campus has an excellent grasp on its mission and its goals and is working toward positive resolution of issues within the context of its mission.

- the commitment toward improvement is evident, especially demonstrated by the decision to decrease the number of priority goals in its strategic plan from thirty-eight to six.
- the team unanimously concluded that there is strong institutional commitment to learning, as demonstrated in the enthusiasm and good-will of both the faculty and the core leadership.
- the University and the Athletics Department have done an excellent job in restoring integrity to the inter-collegiate sports program. Student athletes are receiving strong advising support and the Athletics Department, with the addition of new staff, is carefully monitoring student academic progress with the support of academic Affairs. The team applauds the University for not accepting any more “non-qualified” athletes.
- the University continues to be well served by a dedicated, informed, and proactive Advisory Board.
- we commend the University for its efforts generally to align its resources with its institutional purposes and educational objectives.

Recommendations

- progress on general education outcomes assessment is good, but still uneven across campus. The institution is reminded it must continue to develop its general education programs and more consistently deal with the reticent departments regarding outcomes assessment. It needs to

further integrate program and educational objectives assessment throughout all academic programs (perhaps using successful departments as partners with less willing and lagging departments to get things moving).

- the Office of the Provost is assertively leading the development of an academic strategic plan and it needs to maintain its course in this direction. There needs to be a clearer understanding of the role and responsibilities of tenure track faculty regarding research.
- the academic master plan should address support needs of faculty grant writing and buy-outs of their teaching time in favor of research. At present, this process is uneven across colleges, causing confusion and uncertainty among junior faculty.
- the University's community and regional engagement is exemplary. However, the University should not consider that it has reached its potential for regional excellence. As Fresno State University moves ahead with its plan for academic excellence and service, it should continually reinforce its commitment to improving the human condition in the Valley through opportunity, educational excellence, and applied research.
- in the past year, the University's student service learning program has improved greatly and the campus should continue working on further improvement.

- the Academic and Student Services Expo was well done. The team learned more about Fresno State University through this activity than anything else. The University will be well served to continue this practice in other settings, both within and outside of campus, and to bring the accomplishments of the University to the attention of others.
- the campus should widely disseminate the Educational Effectiveness Review Report and its new institutional research to guide it to its success.
- a feasibility study must be conducted for complete discussion and planning for the capital campaign. Such a study needs to be conducted as soon as possible and decisions made within the University about the magnitude, scope, and priorities of the campaign, prior to initiation of the “silent” phase preceding its public announcement.
- the University is encouraged to begin assessing the impact of technology on the learning environment.
- the University should more fully articulate the rationale and goal for shifting to a greater emphasis on research, scholarship, and creative activity, keeping in mind, its stated mission and purposes.
- the University should review and, as necessary, adjust the resources and other support given to both probationary and tenured faculty for the management and conduct of research. For example, probationary faculty might be mentored on developing proposals and managing grants.

- the University should review and, as necessary, adjust the process and timetable for developing probationary plans so that all new faculty have a real opportunity to tailor these to their individuals needs and circumstances.
- the team strongly recommends that institutional research be evaluated frequently, even as it is evaluating the other aspects of the campus.
- the historic mission of the University to provide access for low-income students, first-generation college students, and under-represented minorities to higher education ought not be lost in the ambition to achieve new status as a research university.

Fresno State University is regarded as the core institution in the Fresno community and appreciated for the educational opportunities it offers citizens of the region. It is also highly appreciated for its contributions to the civic, cultural, and recreational life of the area. The team is excited and enthusiastic about the future of the campus as it continues to develop its areas of excellence, and continue its legacy as the primary educational, cultural, and economic force in the valley.

