

**REPORT OF THE  
COMPREHENSIVE SITE VISIT  
OF CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, CHICO  
WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES  
MARCH 25 - 28, 1996**

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(Essay by Stephen Ehrmann)

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## **I. TEAM ROSTER CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, CHICO**

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## **II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The site visit was conducted with an emphasis on the strategic planning process at CSU, Chico, not an emphasis on compliance and WASC Standards. The CSU, Chico strategic planning process seems a good one, deeply rooted in the university community. This planning process begins with the excellent self-study that was prepared by CSU, Chico, but it is more, and today includes a new strategic plan that, like all plans, is in an ever-developing evolutionary state.

The major assumption of planning at CSU, Chico is that the campus should be learning-centered. The Visiting Team agrees that this is key to CSU, Chico's future. The administration and the faculty seem open to the issues set forth in the self-study and strategic plan, seem well poised to address them, and seem committed to tackling contemporary higher education's most vexing challenges. The site visit provided the team with many reasons to be optimistic about CSU, Chico's ability to realize the goals that have been identified. The team was impressed with the administrative leadership, the dedication of faculty and staff, and the sense of hope and possibility expressed frequently during the visit.

In pursuing the plans and becoming more learning-centered, CSU, Chico faces some challenges: avoiding the "rescue mentality;" cultivating the sense that CSU, Chico is in control of its own destiny; blending faculty and staff development, general education, assessment, and technology applications to achieve a coordinated and effective transformation of the institution to the desired learning-centered condition; making difficult resource decisions that are based on a "culture of evidence," not tradition or institutional considerations; making hard choices among attractive alternatives and choosing the right next steps to take among the many that are available; and taking the steps to ensure that staff, as well as faculty, are included in the orchestrated efforts to focus on learning. These efforts may well be facilitated by keeping issues focused and in front of the academic community, such as by a continuation of the WASC Self-Study Steering Committee or new communication mechanisms from the campus central administration.

Information and technology will be critical to CSU, Chico's progress and may be *the* distinct advantage CSU, Chico has in competition with other institutions. A history of national leadership in several different areas involving the use of technology position CSU, Chico far ahead of many institutions that are working hard to play catch-up. Challenges will include those that are faced by most institutions, such as ensuring that technology is a fundamental change agent, not an add on; ensuring that adequate staffing is maintained; dealing with the confounding factor of rapid obsolescence; and maintaining print materials in sufficient depth and quantity during a prolonged transition to the new information age.

The Technology and Learning Program is seen by many as a place, but it is really a strategic objective. The objective is to assist faculty in using media in their classes, but perhaps more importantly to help faculty to reconceptualize the process of teaching and learning. The ultimate outcome should be to eventually "go out of business," meaning that faculty would assume control of the new technologies in new reconceptualized modes of learning. Information literacy is also important and some suggestions are offered about scenarios for the future.

The team sensed a real readiness on the part of many faculty and staff to fully engage this focus. In a learning-centered environment, the primary emphasis must

be on students. Some insights are offered on the reactions of students and the Visiting Team's observations on residentiality, a nurturing learning environment, and education and citizenship, all with the understanding that enrollments will be an important factor for CSU, Chico as it attempts to transform itself.

Enrollments will be key to the future since there will be direct resource implications associated with a continuing decrease or a renewed increase in enrollments. The competition for students will become increasingly challenging, and CSU, Chico will have to continue the analysis of its niche in the market. Fundraising activities will have to be emphasized, a clearly articulated process and plan for strategic budgeting for future needs will need further development, and the pursuit of strategic objectives will require substantial courage and imagination.

Finally, the recruitment of students will be affected by racial and ethnic demographic phenomena. This highlights CSU, Chico's challenge in making its student body more diverse, since the expected enrollments - California's Tidal Wave III - will be made up of a different racial and ethnic mix than CSU, Chico has been good at attracting. A variety of challenges must be addressed on this subject, including the maintenance of an open and supportive campus and community climate.

The impressive progress of the administrative leadership in leading significant campus wide discussions on multiple, complex agenda items in the short time they have been at Chico suggests that there may be the nimbleness and flexibility within CSU, Chico at this time to respond to these many challenges. Change will be necessary, but the sense of direction, faculty commitment to the institution, and openness to new possibilities witnessed by the visiting team suggest a readiness to meet these challenges head-on.

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**REPORT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE SITE VISIT OF  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, CHICO (CSU, CHICO)**

**BY THE WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES  
(WASC)**

**March 25-28, 1996**

**III. THE SITE VISIT**

The widely accepted purposes of WASC accreditation are public assurance and institutional improvement. The first purpose - public assurance -- is clear, well understood, and amply set forth in the WASC Standards. The institutional

improvement dimension has been less well defined and sometimes is relegated to an afterthought by an emphasis on compliance.

Last year WASC convened a task force charged with reexamining the purposes of accreditation. The task force recommended that a distinction be made between those Standards that are basic and required, on the one hand, and those that are based on a desire for improvement, on the other. In furtherance of this recommendation, the WASC Commission has urged that several steps be taken now. Those include:

- Distinguish more clearly those findings and recommendations that are based on basic Standards -- "compliance" - and those that are based on a desire for improvement;
- Apply accreditation Standards in the context of each institution's mission;
- Move beyond a heavy emphasis on structure, governance, resources, or any single "model" of institutional practice;
- Base institutional evaluations on evidence of effectiveness more than resource or input measures;
- Identify institutional strengths.

Consistent with WASC practice, a preliminary visit of CSU, Chico was conducted about six weeks prior to the comprehensive visit, with four team members, instead of just the chair, and for two days, instead of the traditional one-half day. During that preliminary visit, and based on CSU, Chico's well-developed documentation, it became clear that the comprehensive visit would almost assuredly conclude with a recommendation that CSU, Chico is in substantial compliance with all WASC Standards. This reasoning and a consideration of the several steps urged by the WASC Commission prompted a rethinking of the organization of the visit. Typically, the work of the Visiting Team is organized around the nine WASC Standards, and an emphasis is placed on the first purpose of accreditation -public accountability. Those involved in the preliminary visit to CSU, Chico believed this emphasis would reduce the Team's ability to assist and evaluate CSU, Chico institutional improvement because there would be too little connection between institutional strategic thinking and a standards-based orientation of the Visiting Team.

To address this issue, the Visiting Team sought to identify key themes developed in the CSU, Chico self-study process. Using these main themes of CSU, Chico's strategic thinking, the Visiting Team organized four working groups to examine clusters of issues:

1. The Learning-Centered Campus

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During the course of the comprehensive visit, these working groups met with a broad range of representatives of CSU, Chico constituencies and, in the process, confirmed that there are no compliance issues arising from the WASC Standards. This confirmation gave the Visiting Team the flexibility to organize this report around the activities of the four working groups. The reports of working groups were blended into this Team report. In the judgment of the Visiting Team, this manner of presentation is best designed to convey the insights gained during the site visit and help CSU, Chico to move forward. The Visiting Team report begins with some general comments on CSU, Chico.

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## IV. INTRODUCTION TO CSU, CHICO

California State University, Chico (CSU, Chico) is one of 22 campuses of the California State University System. As reported in previous accreditation visit summaries, it occupies a scenic campus of 130 acres immediately adjacent to the downtown business district of the city of Chico, population 40,000, metro population 65,000. The city of Chico is located in the rural Sacramento Valley about 90 miles north of the state capital. The campus is also located adjacent to the state historical park that surrounds the mansion of General John Bidwell, who gave eight acres of one of his orchards to the state of California in 1887 for the establishment of a state normal school - an antecedent of CSU, Chico.

The normal school later became a state teacher's college, still later Chico State University, and finally CSU, Chico in 1972. Throughout that history, the campus and the city have had a symbiotic relationship and the campus brings considerable employment, economic, and cultural activity to the city. In most parts of the U.S., it would be considered an extremely important resource and would be coveted and supported enthusiastically by the local business and governmental community.

CSU, Chico is thought of as a residential campus, and many of its students come from all over California, particularly from the population centers of Los Angeles and the Bay Area. Nevertheless, only about 10 percent of the students live in university housing. The remainder become temporary residents of the city, and a surprising number stay after graduation, adding well-educated settlers to the positive impact the campus has on the community.

Even though the student body is drawn from throughout California, it is not representative of the state's racial and ethnic mix. It continues to be largely white, middle class, young, and varied in academic achievement. In 1984, the Visiting Team concluded that the makeup of the student body contributed to CSU, Chico's reputation, not particularly warranted, as a "party school" - a reputation that the campus has worked to eliminate in a variety of ways, including the termination of an annual festival - Pioneer Days - that had attracted thousands of people to Chico and caused some measure of turmoil.

CSU, Chico's fall enrollment was 13,798 students. This number reflects a decrease of 17 percent over the past five years, while the enrollment for the CSU System decreased by 12 percent. There is another decrease projected for the fall term 1996-97, and this continued decline with correlated budget implications represents one of the most important challenges for CSU, Chico.

There are currently 586 tenured or tenure-track faculty, a number which has decreased since 1989 when there were 687. These decreases have been driven by the reductions in the general revenue portion of the CSU budget and enrollment declines. The decreases were accomplished primarily through retirements and attrition. The result has been an imbalance, with more faculty members than are needed in some academic areas and an insufficient number to meet the demand in other areas. Despite the overall reduction in faculty, the numbers and percentages of women and minority faculty have risen. Females now constitute 30 percent and minorities constitute 12 percent of the faculty.

Most universities that have suffered reductions in enrollment and budget have problems of faculty morale. CSU, Chico is no exception and, while faculty believe that there is currently a new more positive condition, there is a "corporate memory" of painful cuts that has sustained an aura of distrust among some. President Manuel Esteban arrived in the middle of the period that spawned this distrust and seems to have provided excellent leadership. Working with Academic Senate and union leadership, he has made substantial improvements. The Academic Senate leadership is now very comfortable with the degree to which they have knowledge about the affairs of the university and participate in decision making. Faculty boast about the fact that they have more information and input than their counterparts at other CSU campuses. The Academic Senate seems to have a good grasp of its advisory role, believes its voice is heard in the administration, and is looking for ways in which to encourage colleagues to abandon cynicism and join in addressing the challenges that lie ahead. Finally, the

leadership of CSU, Chico has strong support within the CSU System, including support from both the Board of Trustees and the chancellor.

One obvious result of the first-rate leadership at CSU, Chico is the strategic planning process, which appears to be on exactly the right track. This process, articulated in the WASC Self-Study and a document titled "Strategic Plan for the Future," included the efforts of more than 200 people, reflecting substantial faculty and staff involvement.

In the view of the Visiting Team, the key to the future is the pursuit of the strategic plan. This will require resources, which will be the subject of later discussion. It will also test the university's ability to deal with change. Change will involve some considerable effort on the part of staff and faculty. It is not clear that the entire faculty has come to grips with the need to change or for enthusiastic pursuit of the strategic plan. One of the Visiting Team members referred to the prevailing faculty attitude as a "rescue mentality," by which some faculty believe that their destiny is exclusively in the hands of state policy makers. Some seem to believe that CSU, Chico's financial problems will be resolved as soon as enlightened policy makers are elected. In other words, they will be "rescued." This approach ignores the new realities of higher education and will make institutional improvement more difficult. CSU, Chico must take hold of its own destiny. On this point, the Visiting Team agrees with an observation made by Barry Munitz, chancellor of the California State University System. Chancellor Munitz said that the future of CSU, Chico will be dependent upon its imagination and courage, and those characteristics of CSU, Chico will be more important than anything that happens in Sacramento.

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## **V. THE LEARNING-CENTERED CAMPUS**

At the heart of CSU, Chico's strategic planning is the creation of a learning-centered environment. This concept emerged as an important campus direction during the WASC Self-Study and the work of the President's Task Force on the Future of CSU, Chico. In this context of "learning-centeredness," the "Strategic Plan for the Future" identifies as priorities the following: an innovative and high-quality student-centered campus; faculty and staff development; and enhancement of the academic program through state-of-the-art technology. The Visiting Team agreed with this emphasis and concluded that these points are key to CSU, Chico's future.

The building blocks identified by strategic planning to achieve the transformation of campus culture are (1) the formal linkage of learning and teaching through assessment, (2) the use of technology to enhance the curriculum, and (3) the establishment of a new Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) to integrate teaching and learning with technology. Building on its historical

strength as a residential campus, Chico has developed broad support for new strategic directions that hold the promise for building a distinctive environment for learning.

#### A. General Education

The general education program is the foundation of undergraduate education at CSU, Chico. Students complete the program through a combination of core, breadth, and upper-division theme courses. Within these requirements, Chico has developed two highly creative programs: a General Studies Thematic Program (GST) and the Honors Program. Both approaches involve student cohorts in an integrated learning experience. Both programs have been in place for some time. During the site visit, students who were part of these experiences expressed high praise for the programs. Surveying students who have completed these programs about their experiences, impressions, and recommendations would likely provide important insights for future curriculum planning.

The faculty have just completed a review of general education that recommends the creation of learning communities; the enhancement of the interdisciplinary character of the program; the assessment of programs and activities to build feedback into the academic system; and the improvement of methods of teaching, including support for faculty teams working with block-scheduled student cohorts. A systematic approach to phasing in new initiatives that includes assessment of baseline levels of student performance in each targeted area and identifies methods for tracking effectiveness of new initiatives will ensure greater success of these new curricular agenda.

This reform activity has engaged a substantial number of faculty and administrators in sustained conversations aimed at building on the strength of the current program and identifying future directions. The strength of the present program is the existence of a review committee that is charged with assuring that courses meet the program criteria of assessment; identifying goals and objectives in the syllabi, including a writing and diversity component; ensuring multisection conformity; and providing material on the methodology of the discipline in the courses. The review committee has garnered broad faculty support for fairness while maintaining high standards for course approval. Continuing this successful review process beyond the course approval stage is strongly recommended, particularly in light of new emphases or priorities. Focused review of syllabi in key curricular areas each semester will support ongoing pedagogical reform and ensure curricular vitality.

In light of the common faculty emphasis on teaching courses in the major rather than general education courses, the General Education Task Force at Chico is to be commended for identifying the importance of high quality teaching in general education courses. A recent Academic Senate vote identified teaching in general education as an important criterion in the faculty reward structure, which should

be considered equal in importance to that of teaching in the major. This is particularly significant since students reported that faculty teaching general education courses seemed to be less well motivated than the professors they encountered teaching courses in the major. Regularly scheduled comparative studies of course evaluations of offerings in the major and in general education will allow the campus community to reflect on the effect of the Academic Senate's vote on this issue.

Students also expressed the hope that they could experience a greater integration of instruction across the disciplines. The potential for an integrated learning experience for students in general education will be dependent on the capacity of faculty to identify learning outcomes for the program as a whole rather than focus on assessment of learning in individual courses. Students who had experienced the freshman thematic program spoke highly of this program and suggested that this model be made available to all students. Other students identified the co-op program as an important experience where they were able to integrate learning with the workplace. These students came to value classroom learning more and experienced greater motivation in their courses. Whether greater integration or more experiential learning are appropriate additional goals for Chico's general education program are open questions. Universities across this country articulate many and varied goals for their general education programs. However, articulation of goals is but one step in assuring that these goals are realized. Consistent with its aspirations for a student-centered focus, CSU, Chico would be well advised to initiate a continuing process of discussing how each goal of the general education program might be realized by students through their experiences in the curriculum - what roles specific courses actually (as evidenced in the work of students) play related to stated curricular objectives and what evidence will be used to judge effectiveness of identified approaches to reaching these goals.

Obvious strains exist among resources committed to general education, programs in the major, and selected graduate offerings. The few graduate students who attended meetings with the team expressed concern that needed courses were not available to them because resources had been directed to undergraduate offerings; faculty voiced concern over directing thesis research "out of their own hide." Only a few pages in a lengthy self-study were devoted to graduate education, and little focus on this component of Chico's was provided during the visit. Yet in one meeting with faculty, a strong and articulate statement in support of the importance of graduate education in the life of the university and the health of the region was voiced. As in so many other areas, the university needs to carefully address the ambitiousness of its agenda given its resource base and make appropriate determinations about the role of graduate programs in its overall mission. If selected graduate programs are to be continued at Chico, guidelines for minimum course staffing and resource allocation should be promulgated to ensure their vitality and competitiveness.

## B. Faculty and Staff Development

The Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), the faculty development recommendations of the Task Force on the Future, TARGET 2000, and the Technology and Learning Program encourage faculty to learn about the new technologies that enhance learning, help them develop new pedagogies appropriate for students with different learning styles, and enhance faculty involvement in the assessment of student learning outcomes. The success of the shift in focus from teacher-centered to learner-centered will depend upon the willingness of faculty and the support of the administration to value and achieve these ends. Faculty were uniformly positive about the administrative support evidenced in faculty development opportunities that have been provided. The attitude of the administration is demonstrated by decisions made within the faculty reward system.

An emphasis on staff development was less evident to the Visiting Team during the visit. Staff expressed concern that the support for them appeared to be relatively weak. Many voiced apprehension about job security. The cutbacks in staffing have increased the workload of these valuable colleagues without corresponding attempts to identify what tasks might be eliminated to ease their burdens. The shortage of support for technology creates problems throughout the campus, not only directly but in a domino effect. For example, department secretaries complain that they are less available to serve students because they are called out of the office to help faculty members with computer questions. The faculty members cannot get help elsewhere because there are not enough people in the technical areas to provide the assistance, and the secretaries don't really know the answers because they cannot take enough time away from other duties to get the needed training, even if there were enough people to provide the training. This could have an affect on achieving the goals of learning-centeredness.

Students spend much of their time in cocurricular activities under the direction of staff, and staff are the front line in assisting students in academic offices. It is perhaps here that the interface between the concepts of learning-centered, student-centered, and customer-centered occurs. Students arrive in offices seeking services, answers to questions, and help with problems. If the staff are exhausted and overwhelmed, students are unlikely to receive the help that is the hallmark of a student-learning-centered environment.

The feeling of time pressure has other effects. Staff members complain that they had little role in shaping the strategic plan and that staff have not been sufficiently involved in efforts to communicate about the plan. They acknowledge that staff were welcome on committees and at meetings, but that they cannot take that much time away from their offices.

Staff members reported that the most important thing they wanted was to be considered part of the campus community. The Visiting Team believes that the campus administration seriously wants to include the staff and recognizes the conflicting pressures of change in times of declining resources, but also urges continuing sensitivity and concern for these human resource issues.

### C. Institutional Transformation

The move from a teaching institution to a learning-centered institution will require significant institutional transformation. Faculty will need to think differently about their work; curricula and programs will need to be designed and implemented differently. Although the Visiting Team found many examples of intense commitments to students and teaching, fewer examples were found of thoughtful articulation of the components of a learning-centered philosophy. Informed and sustained institution-wide conversations will be essential to this cultural transformation. Deans and department chairs are obviously integral to this process. However, chairs probably meet too infrequently as a group (reportedly two to three times per semester) to sustain conversation about this or other significant issues of institutional change. Communication and conversation are key elements to institutional transformation. Initial steps to consider to increase communication might include:

1. Initiating a series of regular communications from the University Assessment Committee to the faculty and staff titled: "Who Are Our Students?" This could be presented in a brief, easily digested format three or four times per semester, with each brief note focused on some information about Chico students. The intent would be to initiate conversations relevant to the curriculum that actually begin with students. These conversations are an important starting point if this shift is to occur. Also, one or two faculty members could be asked to write a one- to two-paragraph response to the bit of information that is shared. Sample topics for these briefs might include: Who are our students? Basic demographic profiles including data on high school course-taking patterns, entry-level SAT and ACT scores, etc. What do students expect as they enter Chico? How do they spend their time? How many hours are they engaged in paid employment? How do they spend their free time? What do they read? What computer competencies do they bring at point of entry? What are their impressions of the curriculum? How do they use the library? Each of these questions presupposes a study (maybe very modest). Many of these studies probably already exist, since many data collection activities were identified in our conversations with faculty and administrators.
2. Establishing a new campus convention that any discussion of new curricular initiatives should start with data on student experiences that are relevant to the proposed changes. For example: What is the experience of current students that is relevant to this proposed initiative? What do we

expect to be different after this proposed change? How will we know if this initiative is successful? How will we know if this is a bad idea?

3. Identifying a question related to student experiences at Chico as a focus for campus wide engagement each semester and challenging units across the campus to assemble different types of data relevant to the question at hand. Build in this way a collective wisdom of practice informed by faculty and staff exchanges with students.
4. Including in every talk given by an administrator stories of particular students and their experiences at Chico. This will illustrate the points to be made and the directions pursued.

Many fine examples of the use of assessment for instructional improvement exist currently at CSU, Chico and campus leadership in the areas of assessment is strong. Faculty are conversant with the issue of assessment and strong pockets of activity exist in many quarters. Several faculty suggested, "We have more data than we know what to do with." Initiating interest in data collection will not be necessary. Rather, systematic use of data may require more attention. However, to make the next important step in the direction of a "culture of evidence," faculty will need to be able to identify prominent examples of the use of assessment data in administrative decision making that is of some import to the institution. Though many have heard the rhetoric that assessment is important in continuous improvement, examples of the use of assessment data in guiding significant decisions within the institution were hard to come by. Performance-based budgeting may provide the opportunity to model decision making based upon evidence in a way that will send strong messages to the university community about the importance of assessment. Assessment might be used to focus campus attention on the recruitment of students. Senate leaders noted that the Senate had not talked about this issue. What is the profile of the current student body? How does this profile fit with current faculty expectations? What do demographic profiles suggest about future prospects for recruitment? What might need to change at the university to enhance recruitment? The rhetoric of potential crisis could be made much more compelling, and with that the disposition of faculty to respond in proactive fashion, if some carefully crafted, data-based presentations lead the campus into focused discussion of future options. More importantly, perhaps, given the widespread support for the planning documents that have been developed, translating planning goals into measurable objectives will be crucial. A presentation of yearly benchmarks or targets and data sources that will be used to index progress toward identified goals might convince the community that the university not only has plans, but has strategies to achieve identified goals, and will be carefully monitoring progress.

At CSU, Chico, as on several other campuses, past discussions of diversity initiatives have divided the community. Strategically chosen assessment initiatives can serve to defuse the intensity of such discussions, yet lead curriculum decision making forward in positive directions. Surveys of alumni or

employers about the adequacy of the preparation of students at Chico for dealing with the challenges of a complex multicultural workplace will likely provide strong mandates for change. Interviews or focus groups with students can quickly move these discussions beyond what faculty want to what students need.

Many elements of an impressive general education curriculum are already in place; in fact, CSU, Chico's informed conversations about the role and structure of its general education curriculum predated the most recent round of such discussions at many campuses across this country. However, expected levels of commitment to the representation of diverse perspectives in such a curriculum are far from being realized. Although courses are being reviewed based on the inclusion of "the contributions of ethnic minorities and women where appropriate," the threshold of expectations with regard to such inclusiveness does not seem to have been raised substantially from the time of its introduction well over a decade ago. Faculty development and other supports to curriculum may not have occurred with either the frequency or breadth of participation necessary to broaden educational opportunities for students.

Furthermore, proposed initiatives with regard to reform of general education appear to be heading forward on a track separate from discussions of movement from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered campus. Rather than starting with teachers and courses, conversations that begin with the experience of students will bring important pedagogical issues to the table and focus what may be an otherwise scattered agenda. Block scheduling may respond to just such an analysis, but this was not clear in the presentation of this issue in conversations during the visit.

The Visiting Team also was unclear about the role of several "pilot" projects in the overall agenda for general education. An ambitious integrated model of general education has been in effect for some time. Though reportedly highly effective, such small scale alternatives can be costly to maintain over the long term. Careful review of the lessons learned from this model might substantially advance discussions of the broader agenda of general education reform. Three different orientation models, involving one, two, and three credit hours, respectively, will be piloted for the next year. Again, careful review of what is learned from such initiatives should lead to refinement of one or a limited number of cost-effective models, rather than the addition of a number of exciting but costly new initiatives.

The Team sensed less awareness of the importance of articulation of general education with community colleges than might be appropriate given state guidelines regarding certification of general education. Chico's identity is clearly tied to a four- or five-year time period to graduation. However practicalities suggest the importance of attention to all students, not just those who begin at Chico. This is so especially in light of the number of students who spoke of 20 or

30 units lost through a combination of poor advisement or lack of transfer course credit despite their attendance at California community colleges.z

#### D. Next Steps

Chico faculty and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the success of students. Like many campuses, however, coordination and integration activities that make for the success of students are difficult to achieve, and implementation of the recommendations of the strategic plan and the WASC self-study for a learning-centered environment are likely to be no exception. All too commonly in higher education across the U.S., university resources are devoted less toward the needs of students than toward the convenience of organizational structures and the perceived needs of faculty and administration. In one of the meetings during the site visit, an administrator pointed out that neither the administrative structures nor the reward Systems favored collaboration, innovation, or new ways of working.

There is a need for a formal ongoing review mechanism that would assure that work continues on the priorities identified in both strategic planning and in the WASC Self-Study. Faculty stated that the WASC process has been an engine to push the campus forward. They are hopeful that performance-based budgeting and annual evaluations of the progress made will keep the train moving toward its destination.

Continuing the conversations about learning that are already taking place will facilitate the implementation of a learning-centered environment. During one meeting a faculty member discussed changes in curriculum that were a result of listening and learning. In his case, a study of alumni provided data indicating that students in liberal studies were not adequately prepared for the diverse population in public schools, especially those in urban areas. Based on this information, faculty worked to provide additions to the curriculum to prepare students more adequately for the public school environment.

One way to sustain the current momentum toward a leaning-centered environment would be to keep the WASC Self-Study Steering Committee in place for the coming year as the implementation team. The charge to this team for the first year might include: (1) engage in a continuing conversation about what learning-centeredness means; (2) direct departments and divisions to devise plans for learning-centered experiments; and (3) consider an experiment that would use freshmen as the group of learners whose learning experiences could be evaluated.

Mechanisms need to be identified for charting the course necessary to actualize the impressive institutional vision. Considerable energy has been devoted to formulating plans for the future. The widespread involvement of the campus in development of the self-study is a case in point. Proportional investment of time and energy in developing implementation strategies has yet to occur. Though

many take pride in the extent of their involvement in the planning activities, few seem clear about who will take the necessary steps to move beyond the planning stage into implementation. Important in this step will be the realization of the "strategic" elements of strategic planning. Hard choices need to be made among attractive alternatives. There is no shortage of potential next steps and the aspirations of the faculty, staff, and administrators are high indeed. What is missing, however, is the coordinated mechanisms to prioritize these multiple and ambitious agendas. The range of possibilities for next steps is exhaustive and potentially exhausting. Focus and integration need to be highlighted. And, perhaps most importantly of all, faculty and administrators must confront the reality that to move ahead on a new agenda in times of declining budgets will require eliminating some current activities in order to provide needed resources for the new.

The campus also may be better able to achieve its strategic planning goals if there are deeper and broader forms of communication with the campus community. Faculty and staff reported that they sometimes learn about academic or administrative matters on campus from a local or campus newspaper. This suggests a need to engage the faculty in conversations that range from focus groups to discussion groups based on specific topics. Suggestions that may be considered include a president's newsletter that comes out each week and focuses on issues of importance such as remedial education, K-16 reform, and technology uses. Another possibility is a provost's letter, perhaps twice a semester, that identifies areas of concern specific to academic affairs.

The important goal is for the administration to take control of information in a more pro-active way that frames the discussion for the campus community. This may be linked to a long-term effort at public relations that will focus on defining the conversation at an intellectual level which will engage faculty in local discussions.

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## **VI. INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY**

Information and technology are keys to CSU, Chico's future and the Learning-Centered Campus. For purposes of analyzing information and technology, the Working Group reviewed the planning and activities of the library, instructional media center, computing services, and communications. Particular attention was paid to information literacy, the Technology and Learning Program (TLP), and distance learning. The analysis in this report begins with distance learning, TLP, and general comments about CSU, Chico's aspirations for technology in the learning process. It includes comments on the Library, Information Literacy, and the Learning-Centered Campus, and it concludes with an essay on the "Role of Information Technology at CSU, Chico in 2006."

### **A. Distance Learning, TLP, and Technology in the Learning Process**

For these purposes, it appears that CSU, Chico's most salient planning document is the "Strategic Plan for the Future." It lists five priorities, including one directly related to technology: to enhance academic programs by building a state-of-the-art technological learning environment. Within the priorities are nine goals, the first of which is to "make information technology the distinctive advantage of our campus." The importance of this statement was reaffirmed by President Esteban and was confirmed throughout subsequent meetings. How to operationalize the goal that technology is the distinctive advantage at CSU, Chico is less clear, but it is often linked with the university's distance learning program and its Instructional Media Center.

It is also apparent that the president and provost are allocating resources to technology. The campus is attempting to build out its infrastructure, create a high-speed network to the community, and provide work stations for faculty and staff.

What seems less obvious is an understanding by the CSU, Chico administration of the true and ongoing costs of a heavy use of technology in teaching and learning. Like many other institutions, CSU, Chico has invested most of its technology funds in hardware - the "boxes" as one staff member described it. In order to reach its goal of becoming a technological campus, CSU, Chico needs to consider two other elements: human support for technology and the constant problem of technological obsolescence.

There appears to have been a steady decline in the number and type of technical personnel in Information Resources over the past decade. While this may be true throughout the university because of budget reductions, the campus has increased its expectations of the various technology units in particular. There was a pervasive sense throughout the site visit interviews that much of the technological infrastructure was fragile and perilously close to a catastrophic failure. If it seriously plans to have technology be a central element in the learning process, the campus should consider reallocating internal resources to better support its technology.

Another confounding factor is the rapid obsolescence of technical equipment. CSU, Chico, like most other campuses, does not appear to grasp the real and ongoing costs of creating and maintaining a "state-of-the-art technological learning environment." The useful life of many high-end computers is often no more than three years, software upgrades are expensive, as is the necessary training and support of staff and faculty. Attention should be focused on how to assure that technology can be regularly replaced or upgraded, and support maintained.

CSU, Chico's distance learning program is one of the oldest and most well known in the CSU System. It enrolls about 1,500 students each year. Because of the largely rural character of northeastern California, CSU, Chico has developed an extensive microwave network to serve students remote from the campus. A

significant proportion of faculty have had experience in teaching over Chico's ITFS ("Instructional Television for Students"). Students are currently located in 15 sites within the region. This program serves matriculated students who are administratively indistinguishable from on-campus students. It is the goal for this program to have all traditional academic and student services available to distance students. The university library employs a full-time librarian whose responsibility is to interact with distance education faculty and students at remote locations to assure that library needs are met.

The university also has operated an extensive corporate program since 1984. CSU, Chico delivers degree programs in computer science to working adults in 35-50 locations throughout the U.S. This program is totally self-supporting.

Distance learning is a three-way cooperative effort between the Center for Regional and Continuing Education, the Instructional Media Center, and various academic departments. Continuing education is responsible for all non-technical aspects of distance learning, including support for students at remote locations. Departments which offer programs are provided with limited financial support for teaching on television.

In early 1996, CSU, Chico was forced to discontinue its microwave network because of regulatory changes. Such a discontinuance had potentially devastating consequences for the university's distance education program, but CSU, Chico turned this potential problem into an opportunity by working with the CSU System to establish CSUSAT, a statewide satellite network. The network is already in full operation on two channels, and CSU, Chico is currently the prime user of satellite time to serve its 15 former microwave locations. Because of the vast geographic reach of satellite technology, Chico and other CSU campuses now have the potential to deliver degree programs anywhere in the U.S.

To date, distance education has been successful at CSU, Chico. It is mentioned with pride by both faculty members and administrators. However, it is based on a single technology - television -- and assumes that education must be live and interactive. Nationally, there is a growing belief that live and interactive distance education is fading and being replaced by more computer intensive technology, often built around the Internet and the World Wide Web. CSU, Chico will have to examine the implications of exclusively pursuing one of these technology groups, or the costs of trying to pursue both.

CSU, Chico should consider this phenomenon, rather than continue to operate on the premise that live and interactive instruction has a bright future in distance learning and that the alternative asynchronous model of instruction has been somewhat oversold.

Many persons in the field believe that the core of success in distance learning does not relate to a specific technology or even a particular academic program.

Rather, success is due to the quality of the relationship developed with distant students, manifested by attention to student support, quality instruction, and ease of access. Given that CSU, Chico has an excellent track record in establishing successful relationships with distant students, perhaps it should consider experimenting with alternatives to televised delivery. A good balance of experimentation and conservation will be needed if Chico is to make good on its ambitious aims for a substantial expansion of distance learning enrollments.

The Center for Regional and Continuing Education has a firm grasp on the concept that students are interested in entire programs, not isolated courses. Within the various academic areas, there is experimentation with Web-based courses, but no sense that an entire program could and should be transformed into this new pedagogical model. The campus may want to consider combining Continuing Education's skills and experience in delivering and supporting distance degree programs with the academic resources of a specific department to experiment with developing an asynchronous non-video-based program for students both on and off the campus.

As noted previously, the university's Instructional Media Center (IMC) remains perhaps the finest in CSU. Built largely from non-state funds, the IMC has equipment and staff that rival some commercial media production houses. Funding has come largely from federal grants or contracts with California state agencies.

High-end facilities on university campuses often are targets for criticism because the resources are mainly used to support outside projects. Because of the requirement for self-support, good ideas without money behind them often cannot be implemented in such high-end facilities. Facilities such as CSU, Chico's IMC are often caught in the bind between providing increased inexpensive access to the university community and the need to continue revenue-generating work to maintain a very expensive infrastructure. CSU, Chico appears to have begun to recognize this dilemma and has encouraged the IMC towards greater campus involvement, provided faculty with funding to purchase IMC services, and created the Technology and Learning Program (TLP).

The TLP maintains a faculty-based high-end computer lab near the IMC. Output from this lab can be run through the IMC's Presentation Graphics facility, allowing faculty to produce photographic quality prints, full-color posters, CD ROMS, and other media. The TLP lab is staffed by two full-time persons, with part-time assistance from faculty and students. It was reported that approximately 50 workshops for faculty were presented each semester. The TLP is CSU, Chico's primary operational unit to merge teaching and learning with technology in order to improve the learning environment.

The director of the program stated that "many people see us as a place, but we are really a strategic objective." The objective is to assist faculty in using media in

their classes, but perhaps more importantly to help faculty to reconceptualize the process of teaching and learning. When asked what he hoped the ultimate outcome of the TLP should be, he stated, "We will be most successful if we go out of business," meaning that faculty assume control of the new technologies and no longer need assistance. CSU, Chico should be commended for its progress in diffusing technology into the teaching and learning process.

While the university's commitment of staff and technical resources to the TLP is modest, the payoff to faculty and the academic programs will likely be substantial. CSU, Chico should maintain its support of the Technology and Learning Program and encourage the TLP's relationship with the Instructional Media Center.

While not a focus of the information and technology group of this WASC team, the value of the chief information officer concept to the institution should be recognized. Members of the team were continually impressed with the productive working relationships between computer services, the library, communications, and instructional media. There were high levels of enthusiasm among middle managers. There seemed to be few "turf" battles between units. Information Resources seems to be committed to the university's strategic plan. One staff member noted that "resources go to innovation." It is remarkable that there is even guarded optimism in the difficult financial times at CSU, Chico. These organizational arrangements and leadership of information resources are an asset for CSU, Chico.

#### B. The Library, Information Literacy, and the Learning-Centered Campus

In describing the goals associated with a "learning-centered" campus, the strategic plan lists "Learning and Teaching" and "Information and Technology" as strategic initiatives. Both include the following recommendation:

"Maintain a level of library services and collections to meet the curriculum needs of the campus."

The initiative on "Information and Technology" also includes the following recommendation:

"Integrate information literacy into general education or graduation requirements."

The two recommendations constitute an acknowledgment that the academic library, through initiatives like information literacy, is no longer regarded as a support unit warehousing information for use as needed. Instead, the library is an academic unit imparting information through instructional activities that lead to the acquisition of knowledge and the formulation of wisdom. Library faculty are active in one-on-one instruction at the reference desk and other service areas.

Library faculty and paraprofessionals are active through classroom instruction within the context of the current library instruction program and the proposed expansion to an ambitious information literacy format.

### C. The Role of the Library in Creating and Maintaining the Learning-Centered Campus

As noted, the university has acknowledged the library's important role in the success of the Learning-Centered Campus. In several aspects, the library is quite prepared to assist in the accomplishment of the overall vision. In several other areas, however, the library is not able to participate as a full partner. It may be necessary for CSU, Chico to make a further commitment to empower the library to participate in the accomplishment of the vision.

The library, through strengths of leadership, energy, and organizational relationships, is philosophically ready to assist in the success of the Learning-Centered Campus. The two directors have displayed an ability to manage creatively in a period of declining financial resources. This is exemplified through the establishment of the Extended Hours Facility and the Information Desk. The entire library staff is committed to the success of the university's vision as displayed through the energy they bring to their responsibilities. It should be understood, however, that this high level of energy, displayed through dedication and motivation, is beginning to wane.

The organizational structure of Information Resources provides the library with additional opportunities to assist in the Learning-Centered Campus. Because the library is located in the Information Resources organization, it has formed natural partnerships with the Instructional Media Center and Computer Services. In institutions in which information management units are not organizationally united, these partnerships tend to be non-existent or substantially strained due to separate agendas and a general lack of communication.

While these strengths will be instrumental in the accomplishment of the Learning-Centered vision, the university must be cognizant of the many factors that could hamper the library's ability to assist fully in its success. These factors are insufficient human resources, the impending erosion of collection integrity, too great a reliance on electronic resources, and the continuation of an unreliable first-generation integrated library system.

In view of these factors, CSU, Chico should consider making no additional reductions to the library faculty and the paraprofessional staff. Further consideration should be given to assisting the library in hiring the already funded positions listed as follows in the "Information Resources 1995/96 Strategic Plan": Information Literacy/instruction Librarian, Electronic Information Outreach Librarian, and Electronic Resources Collection Management Librarian.

As concerns human resources, the library faculty has been reduced from 21 to 16 members over the past 10 years. The paraprofessional staff has experienced similar reductions. Library management has been extremely creative in combining units, reassigning job responsibilities, and providing traditional services without a substantial loss in reliability and function. The library seems, however, at the breaking point. The staff, both faculty and paraprofessionals, may be stretched as far as they can go and cannot take on more responsibility. Additional reductions in staff may mean proportionate reductions in service as opposed to assigning more work to remaining staff. Additional reductions could hamper the ability of the university to create the Learning-Centered Campus. These conditions create important questions of balancing progress in times of retrenchment - questions the Visiting Team knows are on the minds of CSU, Chico leadership.

While the collection continues to minimally meet the basic needs of undergraduates, which is the primary concern of CSU, Chico, it does not seem to meet very effectively the needs of graduate students or faculty. Current reliance on document delivery through interlibrary loan and UnCover seems insufficient. The cancellation of approximately 1,000 journals and the reduction in the purchasing power of the overall materials budget has diminished the ability of some graduate students to acquire information.

It should also be noted, that there appear to be some expectations on the scope of electronic resources that will be hard to realize. Such resources supplement a good, curriculum-driven print collection. They do not replace the print collection. Reasons for this supplementary relationship are that many electronic resources do not provide retrospective access, many do not provide non-ASCII print capability, many electronic versions do not replicate the entire print counterpart, and many are accessed through complicated, user-unfriendly search engines.

The success of the Learning-Centered Campus is enhanced by the ability of that environment to provide information to students in a singular, global fashion. The "target environment" described in "Target 2000: Building the Electronic Learning Community" includes "a wide variety of networked library/information/learning resources. . . available from local, regional, national, and international sources. These resources will be searchable from one graphical interface, allowing faculty and students to easily incorporate these resources into research and instruction."

The current online public-access catalog, based on the integrated library system, may not be able to meet this goal. The catalog also cannot retrieve and display electronic resources in an online, global capacity. The library must consequently continue to rely on separate CD-ROM technology. These negative impacts on the Learning-Centered Campus can be eliminated through a client-server, integrated library system. The 20-year reputation of CSU, Chico's academic library excellence in technology is in some jeopardy.

The library is also facing a problem in terms of study space. As the library moves to an environment more dependent on electronic resources, it will need to provide students with electronically based workstations. These workstations triple the size of the traditional print-based workstation. Meriam Library does not have the capacity to facilitate much of this type of growth. Consequently, the library is dependent on student's ability to access library resources from computer labs, residences in the community, and dormitory rooms. There are currently only three open labs, and dormitory rooms are not wired. The future demand on electronic resources as provided by the library requires more computer labs. This may be the basis for the establishment of a student technology fee.

#### D. The Role of Information Literacy in Creating and Maintaining the Learning-Centered Campus

The purpose of information literacy is appropriately defined by the library as an initiative "to support and enhance teaching and learning by promoting the concept and awareness of the need for information literacy (and] provide training and instruction which assists in the development of information literacy comprehension and skills." The current program is composed of library orientation, promotion, and instruction initiatives. These include participation in outreach events; tours; an information desk; appropriate handouts; course-related instruction; and student, staff, and faculty workshops. The Information Literacy Program probably should be expanded as described in the document "Fostering New Models of Teaching and Learning for Faculty and Students: An Integrated Proposal to Enhance Information Literacy (Fostering)."

CSU, Chico should consider including information literacy in all aspects of the curriculum. The competencies and partnerships described in the "Fostering" document are essential to the establishment and success of the Learning-Centered Campus. Knowledge cannot be acquired and converted into wisdom without access to data and information. Data and information cannot be utilized appropriately unless the learner is skilled in understanding, accessing, evaluating, and manipulating retrieved materials.

CSU, Chico should consider bringing about this expansion through some combination of the following scenarios:

1. As a 12 to 15 contact-hour component of the developing Freshman Orientation Program. This would provide information literacy skills to freshmen who are enrolled in the program. As such, this would be an immediate but short-term solution.
2. As a required competency within the general education curriculum. Information literacy skills could be provided to all freshmen through a separate 12 to 15 contact-hour course or as a component incorporated into required freshman English courses.

3. As a requirement in the undergraduate major. This could build on the general skills obtained through the general education competency requirement.
4. As a requirement for graduate students to be taught in the research course offered within the specific discipline. This could provide the student with advanced information literacy and research skills.

Additional library staffing would allow information literacy to incorporate the instruction provided by Computing Services and the Instructional Media Center. It would allow the development of special courses and workshops for faculty and could also facilitate an enhanced relationship with the high school community, which could be influential in the recruitment process.

The Visiting Team considered some additional thoughts, observations, and comments about the use of technology. They are reflected in an essay written by Stephen Ehrmann, who served as part of the Working Group on Information and Technology. The essay is included in Appendix A.

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## **VII. STUDENT ISSUES AND RESIDENTIALITY**

### **A. Focus Groups**

During the preliminary visit, the visitors concluded not only that there would not be any serious compliance issues related to students, but that there were some important planning questions concerning students. Those who were responsible for the preliminary visit came to the conclusion that there was some uncertainty at the institution concerning the experience of students and the concept of "residentiality." While the word "residentiality" was often used, it was not clear exactly what was intended by the use of that word. This uncertainty may have been exaggerated among students. These fundamental questions seemed especially important because of the enrollment issues that are so fundamental to CSU, Chico's future. As a result, the Visiting Team created a Working Group on Student Issues and Residentiality, whose responsibility was to explore these questions with students and others. A decision was made to experiment with focus groups.

The Working Group on Student Issues and Residentiality met with seven focus groups that ranged in size from 6 to 11 people. The focus groups included student organization, fraternity, and sorority leaders; resident assistants; seniors and transfer students; student activities staff; first-year students; minority students; and faculty who teach freshmen and transfer students in small classes during their first year.

Each focus group began with introductions and an explanation of why the Team was visiting the university. Two groups of probe questions were used:

1. What are the distinctive qualities of CSU, Chico? That was usually phrased as, "Assume that you had all the time, power, and resources necessary to change Chico in whatever ways you wanted. What are some qualities that you would not change either deliberately or accidentally?"
2. At some appropriate point during the group discussion we asked, "Why did you choose to attend Chico?"

During the course of the interviews, certain points were pursued in order to understand the group better or to invite the group to reflect on a point made by one or more of them. The questions, however, were generally very open ended. This section of the report is an amalgam of the answers and is organized around four themes: A Residential Community and Residentiality, A Nurturing Learning Environment, Education in Citizenship, and Diversity.

This inquiry has some obvious limitations. The sample of students is small, although most were randomly selected by CSU, Chico from categories suggested by the Team (such as organizational leaders and freshmen). Hence, the findings may not be as reliable as they would have been had more students been interviewed. The interviews and discussions lasted about an hour. Most could easily have continued for at least one additional hour; most discussions were brisk and engaging. Not surprisingly, students appreciate the chance openly to reflect on their experiences; they wanted to engage the questions. Given the nature of the visit, there was little time to discuss and digest the findings. On the other hand, the two Team members who engaged in this part of the study scheduled 20 minutes after each meeting to debrief. Even so, the Working Group on Student Issues and the entire Visiting Team concluded that some of the dominant themes had been identified very well.

#### B. A Residential Community and Residentiality

It took the Visiting Team some time to understand the term residential community as it is used in the CSU, Chico self-study. The best interpretation of the term seems to be based on how students described their community, which the Team attempted to see through their eyes.

The overarching student perception and one of the Team's most salient findings is that the university campus and the larger Chico community blend and merge into a single community without clear boundaries. Eighty percent of the students live within one mile of the university which makes the campus easily accessible. Students said:

*"You can get to your class in ten minutes no matter where you live in Chico."*

*"Students and alumni refer to their Chico experience not their CSU, Chico experience. "*

The campus has a feel of permanence to it. The architectural design of buildings and the use of red bricks are attractive. The rose garden and the creek running through the campus were cited as examples of features that add to the beauty of the campus. The campus ecology permits students to socialize and find places to "hang out." Well maintained green lawns provide open spaces where students can gather. Strategically intersecting walkways provide nodal points where students often meet. Students believe the campus to be safe. The university community is considered to be friendly and a place where students get to know each other. There seems to be a general sense of comfort with the campus environment. Again, students said:

*"There are places to 'hang out' on campus. You can run into the same person five times each day."*

*"Where I come from you don't talk to people because you don't trust them, when I first got here, everyone kept saying 'hi' to me. It was a real shock."*

While the lines between the campus and the larger community are indistinct, certain characteristics were ascribed to the larger community. The fact that businesses in Chico offer special concessions to students, that the city offers public facilities such as public transportation to students free of cost, that landlords offer special concessions to students, were all cited as examples of the friendliness and supportive nature of Chico. Affordable housing was often cited as a major advantage that Chico offers students. Several students mentioned the value of the cultural and social events that the larger community offers. Bidwell Park, tube rafting down the river, and Shakespeare in the Park were cited as examples.

Conversations with students revealed that a significant number of them chose to come to CSU, Chico because of the nature of this residential community. The size and friendliness of the town seem to play a major role in what makes this residential community attractive. It is significant that, while the Chico community plays such a significant role in the life of the university, there is a need for renewed attempts to establish healthy town-gown relationships. As one staff member put it, "We have to extend ourselves outside the confines of the university."

*"Many students come to study here and then stay on. It's a great place to be."*

*"Students realize the fact that the Chico community is economically dependent on the university and its students."*

### C. A Nurturing Learning Environment?

Faculty are perceived to be accessible, supportive, and involved - particularly by upperclass students. Faculty are willing to provide help to students who seek them out. Some faculty, particularly in the sciences, involve students in undergraduate research. Some students said faculty get involved with them outside the classroom and provide their support to student organizations by volunteering to be faculty advisors. The group of faculty members whom we had the pleasure of meeting seemed to confirm student perceptions of a faculty who care and want their students to succeed.

*"Faculty get to know you. They know your name when they meet you on the sidewalk."*

*"My faculty really want me to succeed."*

Freshmen did not seem *as* connected with the faculty, a phenomenon that *is not* uncommon. They did not have positive feelings toward their general education courses. This may merit some further research.

The Associated Students (AS), which is operated by students and manages many campus services such as the bookstore and food services, was given very high marks. Students feel proud of the fact that they have control, that they can do things for themselves and chart their own destinies. Activities planned by AS such as Adventure Outings and the Lecture Series were cited as examples of well-planned activities. Students feel especially good about AS arrangements for student comfort such as "free rides" and the trolley.

Students form study groups and collaborate a great deal, largely through informal networking. There is evidence that the institution has made conscious efforts to bring students together around academic commonalities. Rooms in the library with blackboards and computer ports are designed to facilitate such academic collaboration. Small classes were mentioned as reasons why students get to know each other and start studying together in groups. An example of student collaboration that bears special mention is the computer interest hall in one of the residence facilities. Students in this hall have purchased a hub and have wired together all their computers.

While significant learning takes place outside the classroom, a large part seems to be unintentional and informal. One student said, "There is a brain time and then there is no brain time." Students learn from their experience of living in the Chico community, a subject that is dealt with more fully in the next section. There seems

to be little evidence, however, that there is a "culture of learning" that facilitates the linking of what happens inside the classroom with the experience of the student outside the classroom. In conversations with students, they mentioned the community, the faculty, and the nature of the campus as reasons why students chose to come to CSU, Chico and stay. However, notably few students mentioned academics or the curriculum. This could very well be because students took the academic content of the university for granted.

#### D. Education in Citizenship

AS appears to be a powerful feature of CSU, Chico that offers students innumerable experiences. Students involved in the AS itself, or those that serve on its several committees, have the ability to learn organizational skills, leadership, problem solving, and decision making. They learn how to negotiate for services, put out calls for bids, and establish contractual agreements. They out-source programs, negotiate with the city for services, and gain experience in lobbying both on campus and in the larger community. They make real decisions and play a key role in training students for leadership. The recent student referendum for a significant fee increase over the next several years will permit the much needed expansion of the student union. Through this, students have engaged in long-term planning. Most students who will be paying for this new facility will not get to use it. They have been willing to plan for generations of students to come.

*"Students have power on this campus. They are in control."*

More than 10,000 CSU, Chico students live in the city of Chico. They are dealing with the real world, negotiating with landlords, managing households, and taking care of their finances. The "party" scene provides them with social skills. It was mentioned that volunteerism for the Peace Corps is among the top 20 in the nation at CSU, Chico because students are socialized to be independent. The social scene produces independence. They have to learn to take the responsibility that comes from living in a community, including the perils of not living within the law. The negative side of this is perhaps the inability of some students to handle the freedom that they have. The Visiting Team did not have the opportunity to study the possible existence of a substance abuse problem. This may need research and attention. The image of CSU, Chico as a "party school" is considered by some as being deserved, while others take umbrage to this description and feel that CSU, Chico is no different from other similar institutions.

While intramural and club sports are considered very important, varsity athletic programs are not. Few students attend sporting events. Students lament the fact that there is little school spirit.

In the academic arena, computer accessibility for students emerged as an important theme. The university makes efforts to help students become familiar with technology.

Placement services were given very high marks. Several students said that they came to CSU, Chico because of its record in placing its graduates with reputable companies and corporations. Internships for current students were offered as another success story of this department.

#### E. Diversity

Previous WASC visitation teams have concluded that diversity is a major issue for CSU, Chico. It is important for educational purposes that students study in an environment reflective of the world in which they will live and work. It is important for the success of the state of California and the nation to broaden educational achievement among those who have been less well represented in the past. It is important for augmenting financial resources at CSU, Chico. 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. At the same time, the expected growth in enrollment - sometimes called California's "Tidal Wave II" -- is likely to be composed largely of Asian, Latino, and African American students. It will be incumbent upon CSU, Chico to recruit students from these minority groups in order to maintain its share of total CSU enrollments.

If it were easy to achieve larger enrollments of minority students, then CSU, Chico would have accomplished its goals of minority participation many years ago. Efforts to diversify have not been more successful, in part, because there are barriers. There are historic patterns of enrollment and a lack of critical mass of minority students that may tend to deter others. There are some conditions in the town of Chico, where 90 percent of CSU, Chico students live, that may be uninviting to minority students. There has been a resistance in the academic community at CSU, Chico to the use of some affirmative action strategies that have been successful elsewhere. Finally, there are legal issues that may complicate admissions, scholarship, and employment decisions. California is one of the states that has sought to redefine civil and racial rights.

Despite these barriers, CSU, Chico has increased minority enrollment in recent years, at a time when the general enrollment was declining. The Visiting Team applauds this progress, but believes that the CSU, Chico leadership should place an even higher priority on recruitment of minority students. This may be necessary to prevent CSU, Chico from becoming a smaller, "whiter" campus. If the law changes to make some forms of affirmative action more problematic, it *will* be important to mount an aggressive admissions and recruitment process. 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.

As part of the site visit, the Working Group on Student Issues conducted focus group discussions with CSU, Chico minority students. Those discussions were not

designed to result in a comprehensive empirically valid study. Nevertheless, they are viewed by the Visiting Team as containing important impressionistic commentary and are set forth here along with some additional thoughts and recommendations. These comments and analysis may be nothing new to people at CSU, Chico, but they were sufficiently enlightening for the Visiting Team that they are included in the hope that they will help refocus attention on these issues and give insights on the experience of minority students that could help in building a learning-centered campus. Team members' voices are in the first person plural; the quotes in italics are from minority students.

### The Minority Student Experience - Different in Some Important Ways

We heard some observations about the experience of minority students that differ from the experience of other students. The comments surfaced in two meetings with minority students. The dominant reactions were predictable. There are too few students of color here and even fewer within any given group. There are too few faculty of color to teach, advise, and provide curricular leadership. In this regard several offices were singled out as being clear exceptions; offices identified as being very helpful by students and faculty were Retention Services, Educational Opportunity Program, Housing, and Activities. These offices have staff of color and others who are friendly, resourceful, and available.

The students with whom we met loved Chico. Many of them have been active in minority and other organizations or have served as peer advisors, recruiters, or interns in key offices within the city of Chico. Mature and resilient, they are motivated to learn and serve and clearly want to make Chico a better place for others.

While CSU, Chico was almost universally described as friendly by other students, it was less so for minority students. They are usually the only students of color in their classes. While there are support groups from which to draw and expand friendships, the numbers are small and the circumstances less natural than those encountered by other students. The often heard comments about the ease of access to faculty and the ability of faculty to understand and minister to students' needs were much less often mentioned by minority students.

*"It is not so that they don't want to help; they do. Rather, (the faculty) simply does not understand me."*

There are very few minority faculty, and students are chary of seeking them out too frequently; they are acutely aware of the multiple and extra demands borne by faculty of color. This is a curious situation where students really respect the importance of minority faculty professional success. So - they turn to the support staff in the aforementioned offices for help, advice, counsel, and understanding. They hold those offices and the staff within them in high regard.

While non-minority students see "Chico" as a whole experience, and one in which the boundaries between Chico the town and Chico the university are blurred, minority students are very conscious of the differences between the two. The town is not friendly; the town is embedded in an area known for its social and political conservatism, militias, and skinheads.

*"Once when I was at Safeway I came out to find a notice on my windshield which said 'Leave town or be killed.' When I called to report this to the police, I was told, 'You should be more careful from now on.'"*

*"I couldn't find a part-time job in town. My friend told me that local businesses didn't hire students of color. Finding that hard to believe I went with one of my white friends to look for a job. First I walked in a store, asked for an application, and was told that they had no job applications available. A few minutes later my white friend went in, asked the same question, and came out with an application. This wasn't just one firm."*

*"I remember an early experience at Chico during my first day here. I entered the Safeway parking lot only to observe a group of skinheads beating a young Chicano with baseball bats."*

*"I regularly experience drive-by harassment and profanity when walking at night in town."*

*"Oh, we just know that there are places where you do not walk at certain times of the day."*

*"The police stopped me for carrying a beer can in my neighborhood. As we were talking the white students who were carrying a keg behind me the whole while passed by. Nothing was said to them."*

*"You just know that you will be stopped by the police if you are out walking after dark."*

*"Once I had a party at my home for a group of friends. About half were white. Suddenly we saw and heard about 40 skinhead groups on the front lawn; all had bats or axes, and all were taunting us to come out. We didn't, of course, but that night I lost all of the windows on the front of my house."*

*"You know, this is still safer than where I grew up. Drive-by insults and profanities are a lot better than drive-by killings."*

The town of Chico is not the same for minority students as it is for non-minority students. The support and comfort that is afforded to most students is denied to most minority students. For them it is not an environment that nurtures learning and civility. Nevertheless, location was a factor in students' choices to come here. It is small and one can bike or walk to school (or anywhere, for that matter).

*"It's not like life on a freeway around here."*

It is a welcome alternative to city life. Housing is affordable. Student services and campus jobs are easy to access. Staff and faculty are accessible.

*"They give us their home phone numbers and actually encourage us to call them."*

There was one area where special and powerful benefits accrued to minority and non-minority students: faculty and students volunteered the importance of good orientation. Summer Bridge was frequently mentioned as a proven means to help students persist at Chico. Also mentioned were special help and advising in study skills, time management, managing personal finances, and writing tutorials.

The availability of financial aid was identified as one of the significant reasons minority and other students chose to come. Faculty members, however, expressed concern that students were working too much and wondered if someone working "18-40 hours per week, sometimes in night shifts" could have a good academic experience. Even so, students talked of Chico as being affordable.

We asked if those in the group knew about life at Chico before they came. Most did not, even the two students who lived very nearby. Since many of them have been involved in outreach programs, we asked about the quandaries that they faced. On the one hand they *really want* more students of color to come to Chico.

Yet they know the pain involved can devastate many students. What would they recommend to deal with this? Without exception, they say, "Tell it like it really is," use the "voices of other students" to describe the minority experience, and try to get potential students to visit in advance to experience Chico.

As much as CSU, Chico is a rich educational environment, the university should recognize and acknowledge that the experience of minority students is troublesome and different. Real or not, students feel that their position is precarious, that their role is marginal, and that the commitment of the institution is shaky. Yet, they want the quality learning environment that CSU, Chico affords most of its students, including new technology-based ventures in diversity. See Appendix at page 33. The Visiting Team offers two recommendations, neither of which requires incremental funds.

- Try to create an environment in "greater Chico" that is safe, free from harassment and intimidation, and welcoming, friendly, and respectful for *all* students, staff, and faculty. The climate that minority faculty, students, and staff have described has a deleterious and chilling effect on the lives and scholarship of people of color at Chico. It is not learning-centered.
- Greater efforts should be made to describe the minority student experience accurately and those efforts should use the voices of students to help communicate. There should be no sugar-coating. Rather, CSU, Chico should follow a path that will help potential students make informed choices about whether to enroll, even though this may be painful for the university and the Chico community to acknowledge.

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## VIII. PLANNING AND RESOURCES

### A. Strategic Planning

Creating a learning-centered environment will involve continuous, careful planning. CSU, Chico has taken planning seriously and has a basic plan in place for the effective operation of the university. More importantly, the self-study process and the strategic plan for the future have identified specific areas in which there will be renewed emphasis. The Visiting Team found ample evidence that the self-study and strategic planning processes are deeply rooted at CSU, Chico. Literally hundreds of people have contributed to strategic planning in varying degrees, and they should be available to advance this planning in the years ahead. A continuing question will be whether there is a correspondence between this strategic planning and the resources available to put it into effect. From the evidence available to the Visiting Team, it seems that CSU, Chico has the ingredients for successful implementation, although there are several caveats that will be discussed below. Overall, however, the amount of thoughtful planning and

the resultant documents, including the self-study and the "Strategic Plan for the Future," are quite commendable and the academic community deserves commendation. Moreover, efforts to pursue the strategic objectives are already under way. CSU, Chico has endeavored to provide funding for priorities even though the overall budget of CSU, Chico has been declining.

#### B. Barriers, Realities, and Opportunities

CSU, Chico's "Strategic Plan for the Future" contains strategic directions as well as a plan of action. It is simple, yet powerful, and contains the core of ideas and issues that have been identified as critical, not only for survival but for encouraging CSU, Chico to flourish. After a thorough review of the plan and the site visit, the Visiting Team identified some barriers to the implementation of the plan, some realities, and some opportunities that can enhance resource utilization and aid in the implementation of the plan.

The strategic plan is predicated on the assumption that CSU, Chico will have steady or even increased state support. The political and practical realities produced by the current FTE-driven system are such that, in all likelihood, increased funding will not be available in any significant amount in the near future. As a result, there may be a need to give emphasis to this fact in planning and resource allocation strategies that are developed in furtherance of the strategic plan.

CSU, Chico's planning is tied not only to a stable and predictable budget, but to a budget that is inextricably linked to enrollment. The university has suffered a downturn in enrollment and must increase enrollment. Of course, the Visiting Team was made aware that this is the number one CSU, Chico priority and that appropriate steps are being taken to recover enrollments.

While it is recognized that enrollment needs to be increased, the fact that the environment for CSU, Chico is becoming more competitive also needs to be acknowledged. The strategic plan doesn't contain an enrollment target for the future, although it was explained by some on the campus that it was their expectation to grow only slightly from their current level. Whatever CSU, Chico decides, it must also realize that it will be competing for the same students that many of the other CSU campuses will be recruiting. This could have important consequences for planning and resource allocation.

Another barrier to the successful implementation of the strategic plan is the fact that Chico is relatively isolated and may not be attractive to many students. Notwithstanding its beauty, its remoteness may not be appealing to some prospective students. This may have an impact on recruitment and enrollment. Bringing the students to campus is a good first step; efforts aimed at retention, which is generally good at CSU, Chico, should also be considered.

Over the years, CSU, Chico has had a distinctive niche; the university has served the region and attracted a certain type of student. It has enjoyed a very positive reputation and developed a loyal following of alumni. From what the Team heard and saw, and considering that this is a time of change and planning, perhaps CSU, Chico should take another strong and hard look at what its niche is currently and what it hopes to achieve in this regard with the strategic plan. Is it fulfilling its mission in the context of the broader goals of the CSU System? Will it have to modify the plan to accommodate different and new people and programs? Will the changing demographics of the state of California impact the university directly? The Team believes that the reconsideration, redefinition, or reassertion of its distinctive niche should be a continuing exercise.

Because of these enrollment and funding issues, CSU, Chico, like other public universities, has a need to increase development and other activities that will provide funding independent of its state allocation. At CSU, Chico, there seems to be good activity in this area. The current annual level of gift support is roughly \$7 million, but half or more of that is in-kind equipment from Silicon Valley firms. The amount of gift support (other than in-kind equipment) should be increased. Three new development officers are being recruited that will be housed in schools in a decentralized development system. While no fundraising goals have been set, there is long-range planning for a capital campaign that will be conducted in a few years, after the development staff is established. The Visiting Team believes it is vital that efforts in this area be given priority.

The strategic plan calls for the allocation of resources based on the priorities identified in the plan. In that spirit, CSU, Chico has adopted what is called "strategic budgeting." To date, this has involved the shifting of resources to recruitment and information technology, which is a good beginning. For the future, a clearly articulated process and plan covering all areas of the university should be developed. The allocation of resources needs to follow a process that is based on the strategic plan and that will allow each college and division within the university to attain stable and predictable funding, while also allowing for university priorities to be achieved. The concept of "performance-based budgeting" has been advanced, but it does not seem to have been implemented fully. This should be an integral part of the budgeting process and should extend to all units of the university, not just academic affairs. This is an area of strategic thinking that is being addressed, but needs more work.

CSU, Chico's faculty are its greatest assets. More than ever, they now need to be mobilized and encouraged to "buy in" to the strategic plan if it is to be successful. The Team heard various reports from the faculty that ranged from thinking the plan was good, to perceiving that it had been developed by and for the administration. This could be a barrier and should be taken seriously.

Throughout CSU, Chico's history, there has been the use of "assigned time" for faculty in order to foster research and scholarly activities. Assigned time is

actually time in which faculty are assigned to activities other than teaching courses. With recent budget reductions, this practice has been called into question and challenged as a diversion of faculty resources away from student learning. While this is a debatable view, an alternative is to rethink how the targeted use of assigned time can be most effective, not only for faculty development, but as an incentive to increase faculty performance and productivity. For example, one use of assigned time could be for cross-disciplinary course development or even reassignment to another campus for a period of time. Assigned time could also be utilized for distance education activities or developing expertise in a second discipline. The Visiting Team wishes to note that under President Manuel Esteban, the use of Assigned WTU's has been declining and has reached a very reasonable level as measured by CSU and national standards. This condition may present a good time to reconsider how Assigned WTU's can be utilized, given the new faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) and the stated goal of achieving performance-based budgeting. Also, this may be a good time to consider ways to address the maldistribution of faculty disciplinary strength caused by market demands in some areas and the happenstance process of shrinking by attrition. CSU, Chico may wish to consider new assignments in a renewed general education program, retraining in new disciplines, or swaps with other CSU campuses.

One of the strengths of the Chico campus is its beauty, but this beauty is costly. The Team suggests that a review of the costs of maintaining the Chico be undertaken and that efficiencies be included as part of the campus long-term planning efforts. For example, can partnerships with the city, county, and state help maintain the campus while cutting costs? Are there other avenues available to find relief from the high deferred maintenance costs associated with its campus? The Team believes that this issue is important and should be a priority.

The goal of maintaining a residential program at CSU, Chico offers opportunities as well as barriers. While a residential program offers the opportunity to attract students who are seeking this type of environment, it also presents an increased level of resource use. It was pointed out to the Team on several occasions that having a residential campus is costly and involves a much higher use of support services. The issue then becomes whether resources are being used most effectively to achieve this goal. The Team believes it is worth the effort to review practices and utilization rates of services and determine whether savings can be realized while maintaining an optimal level of service to students.

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## **IX. AFTERWORD**

Civility and mutual respect are essential ingredients in a successful academic community. They are integral to the healthy functioning of academic units, which must have total freedom of thought and inquiry and must protect what may be unpopular ideas. They are critical in creating an encouraging atmosphere for

persons of different race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or sexual preference. In today's university, these conditions also may be especially important in regard to shouldering the daunting challenges that lie ahead. University communities that do not promote civility and mutual respect will have more difficulty building the necessary teamwork necessary to address issues of cost while increasing service to constituencies.

This is particularly important for CSU, Chico at this time. The achievement of the university's mission, vision, and priority goals will require a high degree of harmony and teamwork. Teamwork depends on the degree to which individuals are able to set aside their own self-interest for the common good, their capacity to support group decisions that may be at odds with their personal viewpoints, and a willingness to subordinate differences of opinion that may be debilitating if accentuated. In today's environment, no university can afford to expend its precious human and fiscal resources in unproductive conflict.

CSU, Chico has been plagued by internal disputes that have eroded civility, and there has been strident external criticism, particularly from the local newspaper in Chico, the Enterprise-Record, which seems to have contributed to lessening the level of discourse. The faculty and staff should make every effort to rise above these matters and not allow any distraction from their critical task of reforming the university. Members of the faculty should take opportunities available to them to speak out and insist on a level of civility and professional discourse that may have been abandoned from time to time. This is not to suggest any erosion of the constitutional guarantees of free speech and press or the institutional principle of academic freedom. Those should remain inviolate. The goal should be to have an environment in which there can be vigorous disagreement without acrimony or ad hominem attack. These are conditions that cannot be brought about by an administration alone, but are the responsibility of each individual member of the academic community.

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## **APPENDIX A**

The Role of Information Technology at CSU, Chico in 2006: Consider Whether CSU, Chico of 1996 is a "Frog in Hot Water" (Essay by Stephen Ehrmann)

There's the old story of the frog who was put in a pot of boiling water; almost before its feet touched the water, it sensed the mortal threat, leapt out, and was only slightly burned. Meanwhile its sibling was put in a pot of lukewarm water where it swam around, somewhat uncomfortably. Gradually the temperature of the second pot was increased, and the frog kept coping with its discomfort. Finally it was boiled to death, having never even tried to jump out of the pot until it was far too weak to make it.

What will be the condition of CSU, Chico in 2006? Will the pot in which it now swims be boiling by then? Like other colleges and universities, CSU, Chico faces the so-called "Triple Challenge":

1. Access -- In 2006, will all the people who need and deserve a Chico education have a fair chance of getting one? Or will the academic program's structure implicitly discourage or exclude certain classes of learners and potential learners because of their location their time schedules, their cultural backgrounds, their ability to bear the various costs of an education...?
2. Quality of outcomes - Even in 1996, there are substantial gaps in what college graduates know and can do, nationally. Some problems have been around for a long time: students who leave college still not understanding scientific ideas they have been taught repeatedly since grade school; students leaving college without ever being taught important ideas or skills (e.g., skills for working in teams). Other problems of outcomes are more recent. For example, today's workplace demands college graduates who:

--Are adept in dealing with a vast and somewhat disorganized information environment, and

--Have learned to deal creatively with problems that no one has ever faced before.

How capable will the typical CSU, Chico graduate of 2006 be? Where will that person fall short?

The rising cost of education - The cost of higher education rises faster than the cost of living, since its salaries need to keep pace with those in industries with high rates of productivity growth. That's always been a fact of life for education. The financial vise is closing faster and more inexorably today, however, for at least two reasons:

--Changes in research and the world of work that require students and faculty to use more "knowledge capital" than ever before, and

--Other societal demands that both add costs to the university budget, and add competitors (national debt, health, and social services for an aging population, prisons, etc.) for the same public dollars.

Higher education thus asks for increasing resources from states and students at the same time other priorities such as health care, corrections, and infrastructure are claiming vastly more state resources, and there are vastly more influences that cause prospective students to choose other consumer expenditures. "But we need it!" won't bring in those dollars: not for information technology, not for faculty, not for student aid, not for deferred maintenance.... When thinking about access,

outcomes, and technology at CSU, Chico in 2006, one must imagine how little money there will be to pay for the university's services.

One may choose to believe that in a decade this "Triple Challenge" can be met satisfactorily without need to make any fundamental changes in the way that Chico operates, perhaps because Californians are able to pay substantially more for an institution of Chico's size in 2006 than they could in 1996.

Or else one may conclude that CSU, Chico faces a stark choice:

- Either attempting to maintain the basic frame of current operations, while retreating a bit more each year in its ideals for access and outcomes, until by 2006 it is a bitter, demoralized shadow of its current self, or
- "Jumping out of the pot" - creating better ways to extend a more rich and supportive education to each of a larger number of students at an affordable price.

Technology as "The" Distinctive Advantage?

The strategic plan refers to the desire to make technology "the" distinctive advantage of CSU, Chico. The ensuing description of technology use, however, is virtually entirely of the technology itself (e.g., "provide an appropriate, networked microcomputer on every faculty member's desk"). The strategic plan is somewhat vague about why and how this technology is to be used (e.g., "create an electronic learning community that links knowledge, curricula, and students").

If technology is to be the distinctive advantage of CSU, Chico (and still more if it is to enable this frog to leap out of hot water), the university must develop more pointed strategic thinking about how to extend access, improve outcomes, and control spiraling costs of education. This needs to be done by the instructional and information resources staff together. Neither, alone, is likely to be able to invent the needed strategic changes.

Consider an analogy: Imagine education as it was 2,500 years ago, shifting from a purely oral form (Socrates and his students in the grove of Academe) to a form that also depended heavily on reading and writing. The chief paper officers of that day could not have invented the idea of a "textbook," and neither could (or would) Socrates. Not alone anyway, because inventing the idea of a textbook and the idea of a course made possible by a textbook depends on knowledge that neither of those two people, alone, would have. It also relies on a creative act. Paper plus Socrates does not equal textbooks in any additive sense.

One useful model of this sort of internal think tank is furnished by Teaching, Learning, and Technology Roundtables that are springing up in many colleges and universities under the aegis of the American Association of Higher Education.

These roundtables are often chaired by the provost or a vice provost, and include both instructional staff and the providers of all key information services and resources (e.g., head of the libraries, director of distance learning, manager of the college bookstore).

One sort of question for this roundtable is quite concrete: Imagine that CSU, Chico has by 2006 become a leader at the state and national level, widely discussed for its inclusiveness, the effectiveness of its graduates, and the cost-effectiveness of its operations. The frog has jumped out of the pot. Chances are that the seeds of that transformation were already visible way back in 1996. What were they? What programs, what emphases, what trends visible in Chico and elsewhere in 1996 have become dominant themes of the "evolved" Chico of 2006?

Looking around the country, one can see many initiatives that might be such embryos of the future: the studio programs at Rensselaer, which won the Hesburgh Award last year; cyberschool courses at Virginia Tech that reduce student time on campus while enriching the total experience; the brokering activities of the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications, which make it easier for distant providers and distant learners to work together. Of course, the Visiting Team does not wish to make judgments about the specific approaches that CSU, Chico will take, only to suggest models for consideration.

In CSU, Chico's Colleges of Business and Engineering, a new project, not yet officially under way, might be another such embryo of 2006. The "SAP" project began with the MIS program's continuing dialogue with business: What are we as a university doing well and not so well? How can the curriculum be updated to increase its value for our students and you? The result seems likely to be a richly supported, highly learner-centered, interdisciplinary curricular reform. Among its possible features: less emphasis on lectures and more on student learning by doing, more team work by faculty and students alike as they learn about the integrative processes of re-engineering the work of the enterprise. This line of work has already brought both grants to the university and a healthy supply of job offers to graduates. It could expand to affect the course work of 1,000 students a year by the turn of the century.

Universities must ask tough questions about the future: In what ways do questions of Chico's academic future and its technological future become interdependent and inseparable? A CSU, Chico roundtable ought to focus on questions that no single group can hope to address alone. Here are a few such questions. The list is meant to be illustrative rather than comprehensive.

1. Who Are Chico's "Real" Students and What Sort of Community Should They Be Part of in 2006?

One part of Chico's strategic plan stresses "residentiality" while another stresses Chico's role as the anchor institution of its region. How should those two goals fit together?

A large number of students and potential students of diverse backgrounds could come to the campus for some significant number of hours a week or month. But commuting is a burden on their scarce and valuable time (many of these people work for a living, too). Each year more of them will have access to information resources, especially if CSU, Chico helps. How might those students' time be most productively spent while on campus? While off-campus? What information services and resources will be most vital for them in each place? How does this begin to transform one's idea of "campus"? Of "academic community"?

## 2. How Should Chico Educate Students to Live in a More Diverse Society, in the Context of California, the United States, and the World?

As we have commented, CSU, Chico faces difficult choices around the makeup of its student body. No matter how those choices are resolved, however, there is no question that its graduates will live in a more diverse society.

What roles might information technology play in educating all Chico's students for life in a diverse California? What role might information technology play in educating them for life on an even more diverse planet where the most common language family is Chinese?

Television, e-mail, and the Web enable faculty to team teach classes drawn from different locations, each location homogenous in its own (different) way. Each technology has some specific strengths and weaknesses for students to deal with difficult issues of content (e.g., topics that involve questions of race) and process (e.g., working in culturally diverse teams). CSU Hayward, CSU, Chico, and several other CSU institutions are already playing national leadership roles in showing how faculty can foster "difficult dialogues" in such virtual classrooms.

## 3. How Should Chico Educate Students So That They Can Apply What They Have Learned?

"Imagine whirling a weight at the end of a string over your head," the professor asks the physics student after a year in physics. The string breaks. The student is then shown four pictures, each depicting a direction in which the weight might fly at the instant the string breaks. Which is the correct picture?

Aristotle codified our common sense knowledge of the laws of motion. About 2,000 years later, Newton showed that in many instances common sense is wrong. The first year of physics is spent studying the implications of Newton's Laws. Thus most physics faculty, from community colleges to Harvard University,

predict that their students will do quite well on this short exam (originally developed by a physics professor named Hestenes) by the end of the semester.

Surprisingly most students fail simple tests of this sort, even if they got an A in physics. After seeing 29 of his 32 students fail the test, one physics faculty member remarked, "I've been teaching this course for twenty years, and I am a damned good lecturer. I have to conclude that you can't *tell* people physics. It cannot be done!" In response such faculty have begun to shift to quite different methods of teaching: little or no lecturing, learning through guided inquiry, lots of [collaborative learning](#)." In some instances, because contact hours have been reduced, costs are down despite the fact that students have more information technology (including traditional lab equipment) to work with.

The research on this problem of inert learning is most common in science, but most faculty recognize the phenomenon: Students pass courses, even get A's, and yet a short time later seem unable to apply (or sometimes even to remember) what they have been taught. Is this an issue at Chico? If progress can be made, might not it be possible to offer a great education that Californians can afford?

#### 4. What Implications Does This New Information Infrastructure Have for General Education Reform, and Vice Versa?

The preceding questions all also feed into this one: What shape can general education reform take at CSU, Chico? Other questions in turn spring from this core issue. One of the more interesting ones is: In a technological era, with so much information power in the hands of people in their roles as workers, citizens, family members, artists, etc. - what is a general education? Some of these new possibilities have already drawn some serious

**Footnote:** Notice that these practices also characterize some of the most successful programs for minority access. These five questions have interlinked answers.

thought, e.g., how to use the Web to enlarge the resources and enrich the tasks of traditional general education courses.

But should there also be new educational objectives for general education? In the arts, for example, computers enable everyone the ability (mechanically) to compose music and perform their own compositions, to separate and study the components of music in ways unimaginable to any but a handful of maestros, to create their own visual works of arts, and to design their own living spaces. Should we be educating people so that they can take advantage of these capabilities with more skill and perspective?

#### 1. How Can the Evolving Curriculum and Infrastructure Foster "Full Employment" for Chico Graduates?

One of the hallmarks of the new technology is "connectivity." The SAP project was born out of a continuing dialogue between Chico faculty and industry. The result has been increased resources for the university and many new job offers for undergraduates. How might the development of the curriculum and the development of the information infrastructure support better job prospects for all Chico graduates?

How might the institution answer questions such as these? Giving birth to the future needs to result from the interaction of challenging strategic planning and responsive inventions by individuals and departments. To help marry those two sources of energy, the university might consider using seed grants, perhaps awarded competitively, to help foster the development of embryos of the future: ideas that if successful could be expanded to help the university provide a richer education for each of a larger number of students for an affordable price.

CSU, Chico's self-study emphasizes evaluation of all sorts, including needs assessment. This is especially important in the use of technology. CSU, Chico has invested, and should invest more, in the use of computer-based communications. One of the reasons is to support a healthier, more supportive academic community; another reason is to help students make more use of primary source material in their studies. But in 1997 and 1998, will those things have happened? Are they happening already? Without specific studies, such questions are virtually impossible to answer in an institution as large as CSU, Chico. One source of model studies is the Flashlight Project being developed by the Annenberg/CPB Project, The Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications, and IUPUI.