

Data Element 7: Assessment Activities

The purpose of assessment at CSU, Chico is to systematically collect, review and use information about its programs to foster student and organizational learning. The [CPR Evidence Report](#) provides a comprehensive explication of Chico's substantial assessment work and use of its evidence to improve educational and institutional effectiveness.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

The assessment of student learning outcomes is the heart of Chico's assessment efforts. This work is conducted by our skilled faculty—especially at the course and program levels. The All University Responsibility for Assessment committee ([AURA](#)) collegially [guides](#) these assessment efforts. AURA has helped academic programs to foster the learning paradigm, develop meaningful student learning outcomes, and maintain, sustain, use and report program efforts to assess student learning. With AURA's guidance, all undergraduate academic programs have:

- Developed program mission and goals
- Developed student learning outcomes (SLOs)
- Aligned curriculum with learning outcomes (Through the Course Alignment Matrix)
- Developed strategies for assessing student learning outcomes
- Developed a plan to collect and review assessment results
- Closed the loop and made assessment matter.

Chico has not yet required academic programs to post or publish all assessment efforts. Exemplars of mission and goals, student learning outcomes, alignment matrices, and assessment plans developed by selected programs, however, may be reviewed at this [AURA website](#).

General Education Assessment

General Education at CSU, Chico is governed by a series of documents including the State of California's Educational Code Title 5, CSU system-wide policies, such as [EO-595](#), "General Education Breadth Requirements" and campus-specific policies, such as [EM 99-05](#), "General Education Program," and "Memorandum of Understanding: [Administration of General Education Policy](#)."

This last document outlines procedures to ensure quality of instruction and content in our General Education program and course offerings. All courses in the General Education Program are required to undergo periodic review by the General Education Advisory Committee, [GEAC](#). These reviews are cyclical, with courses in the Core (Oral Communication, Written Communication, Critical Thinking and Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning) and the various Breadth Areas of GE (Natural Sciences, Humanities and Fine Arts, Behavioral and Social Sciences, Lifelong Learning, Upper Division Themes and Cultural Diversity) being reviewed on a regular cycle using well-established procedures. Course-level review generally includes (at a minimum) provision of course syllabi, evidence of course coordination for maintaining cross-section uniformity (for courses with multiple sections), and evidence of course assessment to ensure that each course meets the GE goals articulated in campus-level documents (e.g. EM 99-05). Over the past 6 years, a complete cycle of course assessment has been completed, resulting significant modifications to the curriculum in terms of elimination of some courses and themes, and the addition of others.

The [Memorandum of Understanding](#) also provides for periodic review of GE as a *program*. Cyclical review of the current GE Program came up on the GE assessment "calendar" for the first time in AY 04-05. At that time GEAC was still completing review of Upper Division Themes and used the opportunity afforded for program review for a broad-based consultative process on GE assessment procedures. This effort involved faculty from across the entire campus. While this gathered important feedback on the assessment process, it did not advance assessment of GE as a program per se.

In AY 05-06, GEAC, in collaboration with the All-University Responsibility for Assessment committee ([AURA](#)) embarked on an ambitious program of GE Program-level assessment. A [process and timeline](#) were put in place that focused on the delineation and assessment of GE Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for (initially) three broad domains of learning found in the GE Core: Oral Communication, Written Communication, and Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning. (Assessment of Critical Thinking was postponed for AY 06-06.) Task Forces composed of faculty and administrators were formed to lead assessment activities for each of these domains using a broad, consultative process involving more than 75 faculty teaching in the GE program. [SLOs](#) were defined for each domain and a process of embedded assessment designed in order to measure student performance on these SLOs across the GE curriculum. The assessment process varied slightly for oral communication, written communication and quantitative reasoning, as outlined in the [final report](#), which also summarizes these results. After extraordinary efforts to gather and assess student work (using, in part, the STEPS system) the resulting data were analyzed and compiled into a report delivered to the Provost.

The final report has been widely shared across campus in sessions with the Academic Senate, Academic Department Chairs and in the annual conference sponsored by the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching ([CELT](#)).

Academic Program Review

Since 1971, the CSU Trustees have required that regular, qualitative review of existing programs be conducted by campus. At Chico, General Education as well as non-accredited degree programs are subject to five year program reviews. [Traditionally](#) in such program reviews, the self-study author(s) used data to describe the program rather than explain what the program does and illustrate how well it does relative to its goals and standards of performance. Over the past four years, Chico has been experimenting with a more outcome-based approach. The new five-year [review process](#), part of CSU, Chico's Educational Effectiveness Review, is to refocus programs toward becoming more systematic and intentional about gathering data about the right things—performance and effectiveness—and on using the resulting information to continuously improve what the program does.

The specific elements of this new framework align under the vision, mission and strategic priorities of the [CSU](#) and CSU, Chico, the ten principles of CSU [Cornerstones](#), the principles of the CSU [Accountability Process](#), the Governor's Compact with Higher Education, and the "core commitments" to institutional capacity and educational effectiveness that are embodied in the new [WASC](#) accreditation standards. Under the [new framework](#), programs are to provide mission and goals statements; describe the processes established to achieve program mission and goals; provide evidence of progress toward accomplishing the objectives and the outcomes of these processes and demonstrate that indicators of performance are regularly developed and data collected to inform program decision making, planning and improvement. The process is implemented through a review of the program's [self-study](#), a visit by an external reviewer, and a final recommendation to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs by the Review Team consisting of the Vice Provost, Dean, Chair and other constituents.

Overall, the new review process embraces an organizational learning approach in which the program regularly and systematically assesses its own performance and uses the assessment information to foster collective learning and thereby increase the program's capacity for educational effectiveness. This process now mirrors the approach utilized by many of the accrediting agencies that review the [accredited programs](#) on CSU, Chico.

Assessment in the Divisions and Units

Chico uses strategic management as its core planning process. Each of the university's divisions (Academic Affairs, Business and Finance, Student Affairs, and University Advancement) aligns their plans/actions with the University's [Strategic Plan](#). Each of our four divisions is responsible for developing its own evidence and assessments of their contributions toward our strategic achievements.

Chico has research/assessment units in each of these divisions. Further, there are many offices in each division that are responsible for the acquisition, reporting and use of assessment data. Seen from above, it looks like we are swimming in data. But, almost all the data we collect is either (1) legally required, and/or, (2) judged to be operationally or analytically necessary by a line manager. And, while we do have a lot of data, storage with immediate access is no longer an issue. Our greater challenge is effectively using our existing assessment data and developing better evidence on core academic concerns.

We can only begin here to list the operations involved in conducting assessments and disseminating data. What follows are exemplars of the larger efforts in each division:

- **Academic Affairs:** The Provost conducts an annual operationalization of the Strategic Plan via an Academic Affairs Strategic [Action Plan](#). Assessment of achievement of the prior plan and setting new goals are conducted in annual retreats. [Institutional Research](#) provides reports via the web on admissions, enrollments, degrees, and persistence/graduation rates. IR maintains a large, historical database. IR also handles external reporting (e.g., IPEDS, CPEC, CSU, Common Dataset) and provides expert [consulting on assessments](#)—particularly [surveys](#)—for all units. [Enrollment Management's](#) Technical Group maintains a large Operational Datastore to handle real-time reporting and current analysis issues. The Academic Publications, Facilities, and Database Services Office provides a [datastore](#) providing enrollment, course and facilities information used every day by academic departments in their course/faculty management. There are many more data operations—some large such as the Library and Personnel, some small such as Credentials and the Farm's [Beef Unit](#) animal tracking system...but all are consequential. Our Technology and Learning Program ([TLP](#)) office provides assistance in course design and assessment. They conduct Learning Productivity Projects ([LPP](#)) and their [Rubric for Online Instruction](#) has become widely used. We are introducing a new Learning Management System ([LMS](#))—Vista (after 8 years with WebCT); the LMS both uses and produces volumes of data on learning, much of which we are now learning to more fully employ.
- **Student Affairs:** [Testing and Research](#) acquires/maintains standardized test data on Chico Students, supervises the acquisition and reporting of Student Evaluations of Teaching, provides expert psychometric and test scoring services to faculty and is the lead office in conducting assessments within this division. [Financial Aid](#) has extensive data systems, as do the [Housing](#) and the [Health Service](#) offices. Smaller, but no less mission critical, datasets include the [Equal Opportunity Program's](#), [Campus Alcohol and Drug Education Center](#), and Disability Support Services' ([DSS](#)), for example.
- **Business & Finance:** The division collects assorted data and conducts analyses regarding the [financial management](#) of the university as well as business processes and customer satisfaction. [Budget Analysis and Research](#) provides assistance in the preparation, analysis, and management of the financial resources of the University in support of the University's strategic priorities. [Financial Accounting and Reporting](#) prepares campus [financial statements](#). [B&F Technologies](#) provides analytic and user support to Financial Services and the general campus users of Business Financial data systems (using both real-time and warehoused data.) Full accounting and purchasing operations are maintained. There are also, for example, [facilities management](#) data systems, inventory systems, and an [environmental health](#) database. The division is developing a [strategic planning](#) function that will specialize in tracking and publishing division results from quality improvement initiatives, performance measurement, customer satisfaction and other strategic initiatives.
- **University Advancement & Development:** Large alumni and donor data systems are maintained. Data mining analytic techniques are used to better understand our donors. Diversifying our sources of revenue is a strategic priority; metrics/assessments of “giving” are published (for example, in the CSU system's [Accountability Process](#).) The Public Affairs Office maintains a [Faculty Experts](#) database that makes it easier for the public to access our knowledge (it is a Strategic Priority *to serve the needs of our region*.)

All of these data systems have been developed because they are either required and/or useful in student and organizational learning and effectively managing the resources provided to the University by the people of California.

Exemplars of Institutional Assessment

The Office of Institutional Research provides the University with the best available factual data related to university functions. The Office provides services for assisting the University and campus units in conducting assessment of their programs.

Assessment	Purpose
Survey of Recent Graduates	Annual survey of Recent Spring Graduates four months after graduation. Assess post-degree job experience and assesses learning outcomes. It is the longest running post-graduation assessment in the CSU—the 2006 survey was the 32 nd . Data have been routinely shared with programs undergoing academic program review or accreditations. Several customized graduate surveys are conducted for specific programs each year (e.g., College of Business Alumni Survey).
National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)	NSSE is conducted in even numbered years. Each academic program receives NSSE data and develops engagement strategies/activities to address the results. Chico also participated in the FSSE (the faculty version of the NSSE) in 2004.
Student Evaluations of Teaching	All faculty are assessed by students in all of their spring term courses; temporary and probationary faculty are also assessed in fall terms. Approximately 70,000 individual evaluations are collected in the spring. The results are closely examined by department chairs and department personnel committees. The results are also used extensively by individual faculty to guide their professional development.
Quality Improvement Surveys	In 2006, Chico participated in ten of the CSU system Quality Improvement surveys. The assessment results are widely used by both Business and Finance and Academic units in resource planning and strategic management.
Faculty, Staff & Student Information Technology Surveys	Surveys of key technology constituents are conducted biennially. The data is widely shared (for example , see page 8) and forms the assessment base of our successful technology programs. A separate survey assessing our Smart Classrooms is conducted periodically. The CSU System also conducts biennial Technology Users Surveys.
Housing surveys	University Housing and Food Service—a key unit in our recruiting and retention of freshmen—annually surveys its clients at the beginning and end of each academic year.
Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement	The graduation writing assessment requirement (GWAR) is a systemwide requirement. The California State University system requires upper-division undergraduate students to demonstrate a level of writing proficiency which may be expected of college graduates. The GWAR is the CSU's and Chico State's key writing quality assurance program. Chico operationalizes the GWAR while the CSU regularly assesses the GWAR program.
Ad hoc Assessments	A great deal of ad hoc assessment is done to provide evidence for immediate decisions. Institutional Research conducts 10-15 surveys a year (examples). Other offices conduct their own assessments efforts pertinent to their mission. For example, The Campus Alcohol and Drug Education Center conducts regular CORE surveys as well as Alcohol-Edu assessments. Likewise, in the preparation of its annual Performance Report , Information Resources conducts multiple assessments.

Exemplars of Institutional Databases¹

CSU, Chico uses a number of web-enabled databases as central sources of information to support daily operations and decision making at all levels of the institution.

¹ Authorization, where required, will be made available to Visiting Team members upon request.

Databases	Purpose
Chico Facts	Chico Facts provides access to a concise description of CSU, Chico in terms of its financial profile, student profile, faculty and staff profile, student-faculty ratios, colleges and academic programs, average class sizes, facilities, special programs and services.
CSU Facts	CSU Quick Facts provides access to data and/or reports on such information as academic performance, accountability, employee profiles, enrollments, degrees granted, recruitment, student fees, student financial aid, student success, and budget and financial audit statements.
Academic Database I	This academic database provides information on class schedules, classroom and office assignments, classroom utilization, smart classroom configuration, facility assignments by college and department, construction projects and Facilities Management services.
Academic Database II	This second academic database provides information on business process guides, academic facilities scheduling and utilization, smart classrooms, event scheduling, course inventory reports and audits, faculty workload reports and audits, and current enrollment and FTES data.
Common Data Set	The Common Data Set (CDS) initiative is a collaborative effort among data providers in the higher education community and college guide publishers as represented by The College Board, Peterson's - a Thomson Learning Company, U.S. News & World Report, and Wintergreen/Orchard House. In addition to general information about the institution, the Common Data Set includes information on first-time, first-year admissions, transfer admissions, enrollment and persistence, academic offerings and policies, student life, annual expenditures, financial aid, instructional faculty, class sizes, and degrees conferred.
Chico Common Management System	Common Management Systems (CMS) is a CSU initiative to bring state-of-the art services to students, faculty, and staff through improved, integrated, administrative systems. Chico began the CMS implementation in 2001-2002 with PeopleSoft Financials 7.5 and Human Resources 8.0 . Over the next few years the CMS teams proceeded to implement Student Administration 8.0 modules including Admissions, Campus Community, Financial Aid, Student Records/Registration, Student Financials, and Advising/Transfer Credit. In addition, the campus performed an upgrade from Financials 7.5 to Financials 8.4 and completed the financials administrative suite by adding Asset Management, Accounts Receivables (non-student), and Billing modules. Human Resources teams implemented Base Benefits and recently improved campus time-keeping functionality by implementing the Time and Labor module. Student Administration piloted self-service for students in April 2005 with online registration via the Chico State Portal. All administrative areas are investigating self-service capabilities for students, faculty, and staff, and the new campus portal environment has increased the usability of the CMS functions.
Enrollment Management	This set of databases provides access to student information and reports for authorized users. Information available includes data on
Facts and Statistics	This set of databases provides information on college / department / unit data on applicants, enrolled students, persistence & graduation rates, and degrees granted on an annual and semester basis.
Financial Data Mart	BRIO On-Demand server for access to business and financial information for authorized users. The Financial Data Mart includes data on departmental budgets, encumbrances and actual transactions.

Participation in CSU System Assessment

It is important to recognize that Chico State is part of a much larger educational organization—the California State Universities (CSU) system. As a result it benefits from substantial systemwide efforts to develop/report data, assess educational outcomes and measure accountability. Participating as a member of a much larger system allows Chico to leverage its efforts. The CSU facilitates the development of communities of practice across its 23 campuses and system office.

Exemplars include:

- The CSU Trustees have [actively promulgated/supported assessment](#) efforts since 1990. Our system has constructed communities of practice through a 23-campus [Assessment Council](#) that meets regularly and the publication of articles on assessment in its journal--[Exchanges: The Online Journal of Teaching and Learning in the CSU](#).
- Systemwide efforts led to the development of widely-used outcome assessment instruments/practices such as the English Placement Test and Elementary Level Math test. This remarkable, large-scale research resulted in the CSU's [Early Assessment Program](#) –established to provide students the opportunity to measure their readiness for college-level English and mathematics during their junior year in high school in order to facilitate improvement of their skills in their senior year.
- The CSU's major systemwide strategic planning initiative –Cornerstones—led to the development of the systemwide [Accountability Process](#). "The California State University will account for its performance ... through regular assessment of student achievement and through periodic reports to the public regarding our broader performance." Both systemwide and campus outcomes are reported to the Board of Trustees on a regular basis.
- In 1993 the CSU started a systemwide [Quality Improvement](#) effort based on best practices, benchmarking and communities of practitioners. Much of this work has focused on administrative operations (e.g. Facilities and Parking) but much of it is germane to academic outcomes as well (e.g., Library and Financial Aid Services). In 2006 alone, more than half the CSU campuses participated in as many as sixteen surveys. This work follows national standards of best practice developed by the Academic Quality Improvement Program.
- CAFG—the [Campus Actions to Facilitate Graduation](#) project demonstrates the power the system can bring to bear on academic objectives. The goal is to increase graduation rates by helping enrolled students to progress toward their degrees. The project melds strategic management with the multi-campus qualitative/quantitative assessment and understanding of students. Knowledge is developed; shared on a large scale; and, communities of practice are extended.
- The System, in partnership with the Educational Testing Service, developed the ICT ([Information and Communication Technology](#)) [Literacy Assessment](#) as a comprehensive test of information and communication technology skills that uses scenario-based tasks to measure ICT literacy proficiency. The ICT Literacy Assessment evaluates postsecondary students' ability to define access, manage, integrate, evaluate, create and communicate information in a technological environment.

Assessment Activities at CSU, Chico

The purpose of assessment at CSU, Chico is to systematically collect, review and use information about its programs to foster student and organizational learning. The content of this required data element, when reviewed in combination with Chico's *Reflective Essays* and [CPR Evidence Report](#), suggests that Chico has made significant progress, since the 1996 Team Visit, in assessment and use of evidence to improve educational and institutional effectiveness. Still, as noted in the Challenges and Recommendations section of the *Concluding Essay*, Chico needs to make further progress in the establishment of a true "culture of evidence."