

REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM
For Reaffirmation of Accreditation

To:
California State University Sacramento

Campus Visit
April 10 – 13, 2017

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The team evaluated the institution under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

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SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

A. Description of the Institution and Reaccreditation Process

Founded in 1947, California State University, Sacramento (Sacramento State) is the sixth largest university in the California State University System (CSU). It is located in the California state capital and serves more than 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Through its eight academic colleges, the university offers 58 undergraduate majors, more than 50 master's degrees, including teaching credentials and graduate certificates, and two doctoral programs, one in educational leadership and policy and one in physical therapy. It also offers a joint doctorate in public history with the University of California, Santa Barbara. In 2015-2016, Sacramento State awarded 5,577 bachelor's degrees; 756 masters; and 37 doctoral degrees, totaling 6,370.

Sacramento State's Carnegie Community Engagement designation, received in 2010, reflects its mission to serve the region, the state, and the local community. Students work with community partners around the region, and since the founding of the Community Engagement Center in 1996, they have volunteered for more than one million service hours at 300 community partner sites. Its location in the state capital has allowed Sacramento State to develop programs and centers that provide community-based learning experiences for students, as well as resources for the community.

The university is an Asian American/Native American/Pacific Islander-serving Institution (AANAPISI) and a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). In fall term 2016, the university enrolled 30,510 students, 91.4% of whom were undergraduates. Most students attended full-time (81.3%). In keeping with its AANAPISI and HSI designations, 29.4% of enrolled students were Latino, 28.2% White, 20.1% Asian, 6.2% multiracial, 6.0% other, 5.6% African-American, 3.3% international, 0.7% Pacific Islander, and 0.3% Native American.

Among the 1,729 faculty employed in fall 2016, 66.7% were White, 11.2% Asian, 7.5% Latino, 7.5% Other/Unknown, 5.0% Native American, 1.1% multiracial, and 1.0% Native American. Most faculty were employed part-time (60.3%), with 60.3% holding non-tenured positions and 39.7% either tenured or on tenure-track. The majority were lecturers (56.7%), with 22.4% ranked as full professor.

The operating budget for Sacramento State in fiscal year 2015-2016 (the last year reported in the self-study document) was \$284,202,137, with 52% from student tuition and fees and 48% from state appropriations. A strategic plan was in place for 2014-2020. On July 1, 2015, Dr. Robert S. Nelsen joined the campus as its ninth president, bringing a vision for placing students at the center of the institution's educational and organizational initiatives.

Accreditation History. WASC first accredited Sacramento State in 1951. The university's recent accreditation history included a Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) visit in March 2007, followed by a June 2007 commission action to receive the CPR team report and reschedule the Educational Effectiveness Review (EER) for fall 2008 to fall 2009. The review team conducted an EER visit in April 2009, followed by a June 2009 commission action to receive the EER report and reaffirm accreditation. In an action letter dated July 27, 2007, the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) requested a spring 2012 Interim Report to address: a) progress on assessment of student learning and program review; b) continued development of planning and budgeting, and c) progress in promoting student success.

In its action letter, the Commission also asked for a Special Visit in fall 2012 to review the EdD degree program. In June 2007, through a Structural Change action, the Commission acted to: 1) approve the doctorate in Educational Leadership; 2) request a progress report by December 1, 2008, evaluating the progress made in addressing the July 27, 2007, action letter; 3)

schedule the fall 2012 special visit; and, 4) request that the EdD be given special attention during the next comprehensive review. The Commission received the report in December 2008, but requested an addendum; it accepted the report and addendum in January 2009. On May 15, 2012, the Commission accepted the Interim Report. A staff action on March 5, 2013, in response to the EdD program review, recommended continuation of the program.

The Commission scheduled the Institutional Proposal for spring 2015, with the next CPR in spring 2017 and EER in fall 2018. During this time, the WASC review process changed, resulting in a staff action in October 2013 to schedule an Off-Site Review (OSR) in fall 2016 and a campus visit in spring 2017. The new process no longer required an Institutional Proposal.

From July 2007 to April 2015, there were 14 Substantive Change actions. The Commission approved all of these, with the exception of the proposal for an International Master's of Business Administration (IMBA), which a panel of the Commission voted not to accept on January 24, 2012. Following a resubmission, the proposal received interim approval, with final approval contingent on approval from the CSU Chancellor's Office. On January 8, 2013, the Commission acted to grant final approval.

B. Description of Team's Review Process

On January 27, 2016, the WSCUC appointed a review team to conduct the OSR, followed by a campus visit in 2017. Members of the team were: chair, George R. Blumenthal, Chancellor, University of California, Santa Cruz; assistant chair, Kathi A. Ketcheson, Director, Office of Institutional Research and Planning, Portland State University; Rong Chen, Interim Associate Provost for Academic and International Programs, California State University, San Bernardino; Steven N. Garcia, Vice President for Administrative Affairs and Chief Financial Officer (retired), California State Polytechnic University, Pomona; and Christine Victorino,

Associate Chancellor, University of California, Riverside. Christopher Oberg, Vice President, WSCUC, served as Institutional Liaison leading up to the visit, and Richard Osborn, Vice President, WSCUC, served as the visit liaison, accompanied by Tamela Hawley, Vice President, WSCUC, who will serve as the new staff liaison and who also participated in the review.

On September 2, 2016, Sacramento State submitted its institutional report and supplemental materials. The team reviewed the materials and completed worksheets in preparation for the initial review. On October 18, 2016, Chancellor Blumenthal led a conference call during which the team discussed the consolidated worksheets and identified issues it wished to pursue during the OSR. The team met at the WASC offices in Alameda, California, on November 14-15, 2016, to conduct the OSR and to prepare Lines of Inquiry for the campus visit scheduled for April 10-13, 2017. During a teleconference with Sacramento State at the conclusion of the team meeting, Chancellor Blumenthal confirmed that the team recommended proceeding with the campus visit, reviewed the Lines of Inquiry with the university president and campus accreditation team, and discussed the next steps. WSCUC Liaison Richard Osborn submitted the Lines of Inquiry to the campus and the assistant chair submitted requests for additional information needed by the team to prepare for the visit. The team completed its draft report on March 3, 2017, and held a pre-visit conference call on March 9, 2017.

C. Institution's Reaccreditation Report and Update: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence

Following its review of the institutional report, the team concluded that Sacramento State had demonstrated a clear focus on improvement and noted the recent implementation of new initiatives under President Nelsen. The team felt that the report was concise, well-organized, and forthright, clearly identifying areas where the institution was doing well and others where it was

in the process of improvement. The report was honest about challenges and its preparation had included broad representation from the campus community. It also conveyed a strong campus-wide commitment to community engagement, as well as a commitment to place students at the center of the institution's educational and organizational initiatives.

The team agreed that Sacramento State had provided sufficient evidence for its actions, decision-making, and claims, while also recognizing the need to improve data gathering and analysis. It was clear that the new leadership team had catalyzed improvement in every area of the institution. While the report clearly and seriously addressed the Criteria for Review (CFRs), as well as concerns from previous reviews and internal processes, specific information on the campus's plans for continued development of internal processes, such as assessment and program review, appeared to be lacking. Statistical information appeared only in the appendices: the team felt that direct inclusion of relevant tables and charts in the narrative would have strengthened the report. The team also felt that more information on how engagement with issues permeated the institution and how the campus data used to inform decision making at all levels should have been included in the report.

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ESSAYS

Component 1: Response to previous Commission actions

The institutional report contained a brief section on Sacramento State's response to previous Commission action letters, with a link to a summary report that contained more detail. The summary report also contained links to supporting documents. As mentioned in an earlier section of the team report, the July 27, 2007, action letter requested an Interim Report in spring 2012 to address the institution's progress in assessment, continued development of planning and

budgeting, and progress in promoting student success. The letter also scheduled a special visit in fall 2012 to review the EdD degree program.

In the area of assessment, the summary pointed to Essays 3 and 4 in the institutional report, indicating that work to enhance both assessment and program review was still in progress. While the campus had made serious efforts to address the Commission's concerns, work was still underway at the time of the accreditation review. The summary report cited Essay 3 as evidence of progress on promotion of student success and noted that the Commission's response to the 2012 Interim Report suggested that the university had addressed the concerns expressed in the 2007 Action Letter.

In the area of planning and budgeting, the summary report discussed the creation of a University Budget Advisory Committee (UBAC) to address issues of alignment, transparency, involvement of faculty, and communication of budget information to the campus. It also mentioned the implementation of analytical software to support capacity planning; the campus planned to launch this software in spring 2017.

Following the fall 2012 Special Visit, the EdD program undertook a number of actions that resulted in staff action on March 5, 2013, to recommend continuation of the program.

Component 2: Compliance with the Standards and federal requirements; Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, was that the institution had demonstrated sufficient evidence of compliance with each of the Standards. It also found that the institution had met federal requirements for credit hour, marketing and recruitment, student complaints, and transfer policy (see Appendices), and had completed the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators in a reflective and analytical way.

Standard 1. The team’s review of the institutional report found that the campus had stated a clear commitment to place student success at the center of its educational and organizational initiatives. This clearly follows from the well-formulated and well-designed mission and vision statements displayed on the institution’s website. While the team noted that the mission statement explicitly acknowledged Sacramento State’s capital location, it also felt that the vision statement did not distinguish Sacramento State from other universities, in general, or from other CSU institutions, in particular.

The campus had established clear and well-defined learning goals for all of its programs. At the time of the review, most programs (but not all) had analyzed outcomes data to assess the extent to which students had achieved learning goals at the time of the review. While the team felt that the campus appeared to be transparent about its learning goals, it also felt that the assessment of outcomes needed further development. In addition to the assessment process, the campus was working on a new program review policy (CFR 2.7).

The university provided most of its policies in supporting documents and on the website. These included a mission statement on diversity (CFR 1.1), educational objectives (CFR 1.2), academic freedom policy (CFR 1.3), commitment to diversity (CFR 1.4), communication with WSCUC (CFR 1.8), and the role of its governing board (CFR 1.5). Clear policies regarding student grievances and complaints or records retention (CFR 1.6).

It was clear that the Sacramento State website needed considerable improvement in order to best support the campus efforts to improve student success. The team strongly supported the efforts that were underway and recommended that the campus complete the establishment of governance mechanisms, and make these upgrades a resource priority (CFR 1.6, 2.12).

Standard 2. In its report, Sacramento State demonstrated diligent and thoughtful efforts toward compliance with the Standards and federal requirements (CFR 2.7, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7). In Essay 4, the university outlined its academic program review procedures, including oversight by the Academic Program Review Oversight Committee (APROC), a subcommittee of the Curriculum Policies Committee (CPC), recommendation by the Faculty Senate, and approval by the president

The university acknowledged that earlier program self-studies were “highly descriptive in nature... [and] also generally failed to address substantive issues.” In recognizing the limited scope of prior self-studies and program reviews, the university had made strides toward requiring all self-studies to include general program information, a summary of learning outcomes, and assessment results. Moreover, the university had made changes to Academic Program Review (APR) to improve practice, as well as to identify further areas of concern in timely completion of the program reviews, namely appointment of external consultants and follow-up on review and recommendations.

In reviewing the program review reports, however, it was evident to the team that APR policies and procedures continued to be inconsistent. There were a few notable examples of robust self-studies with tangible assessments of learning outcomes, followed by evidence-based recommendations. In addition, the university’s discussion of the use of data and evidence in Essay 4 was limited. Beyond standard university statistics provided by the Office of Institutional Research (OIR), it was unclear how the university utilized data to help guide institutional decision-making (CFR 4.2).

Despite its emerging culture of assessment, the university demonstrated a commitment to improving the academic program review process. The team suggested that Sacramento State

further leverage the capabilities of OIR to advance the university's capacity for self-reflection and evidence-based decision-making.

The institution's academic programs, both graduate and undergraduate, were in keeping with CSU standards for content, rigor, and pedagogical soundness (CFR 2.1). Most of these programs had clear entry-level and exit requirements (CFR 2.2). Undergraduate offerings shared a coherent general education program. Baccalaureate Learning Goals (BLG) applied to both general education and individual degree programs. Graduate programs also followed a set of Graduate Learning Goals (GLG—CFR 2.2b).

Sacramento State's general education (GE) program followed CSU Executive Order 1033, which specified the structure of GE across the CSU, including the unit-distribution among the different sub-areas and learning outcomes for these areas. The institution made a series of changes in the GE program starting in 2012-2013, reducing the total GE units from 51 to 48 and simplifying Areas C and D (CFR 2.2a).

The CSU mandated that undergraduate programs have 120 semester units (both the minimum and maximum), with exceptions granted by the CSU Chancellor's Office. With GE at 48 units at the time of the review—the lowest number of units possible—Sacramento State was able to offer baccalaureate programs that demonstrated disciplinary depth (CFR 2.2, 2.2a). Most of these programs incorporated the four WASC Core Competencies: Written and Oral Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, Information Literacy, and Critical Thinking. The institution reviewed degree programs every six years; those accredited by specialized accreditation agencies used those reviews in place of university program review, a common practice in the CSU.

Standard 3. The total number of faculty increased by 347 from 2012 (1,382) to 2016 (1,729), representing an increase of 25.1% during this period. Of the total new faculty, 94% were part-time, non-tenured or tenure track; total minority faculty increased by 104 (32.1%); females increased by 107, but declined from 51.2% of total faculty to 48.8% (CFR 3.1). Staff hiring during the same period reflected an increase of 127, representing 1% growth. The number of minorities increased by approximately 1.3%, while females increased by nearly 1%. For women and minorities, the percentage of total remained constant (CFR 3.1).

Increases in faculty numbers appeared to have kept pace with an enrollment growth of approximately 1% during this period. There appeared to be a sufficient number of qualified and diverse faculty and staff to support programs and operations (CFR 3.1).

The University Policy Manual clearly articulated faculty and staff policies, practices, and evaluation. More specifically, the University Appointment, Retention, Tenure and Promotion Policy outlined the policies and procedures for appointment, evaluation, and retention of faculty in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement. Staff hiring and evaluation policies and practices were well developed and applied (CFR 3.2).

There were many avenues for faculty and staff development and improvement. For example, faculty had access to Professional Learning Communities, Faculty Learning Communities, and a Summer Teaching Institute offered through the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). Staff accessed professional development workshops through the Professional Development and Training unit in the Office of Human Resources (CFR 3.3).

During the past three years, the university had increased its total operating revenues from \$257.2 million to \$284.2 million, an increase of \$27 million. In those years, the institution had no operating deficits. In the 2016-2017 fiscal year, the institution received a total funding of

\$289.5 million. These figures were inclusive of state appropriations and fee revenue. A preliminary assessment of the university's allocation reflected a projected deficit of approximately \$1.0 million, but the leadership put forth guidelines targeting a 1% reduction plan. According to the UBAC, the institution achieved its reduction plan, while maintaining a focus on the university's three strategic priorities (CFR 3.4).

Through the budget process, the institution identified a list of facilities, health, safety, and technology projects that it had addressed previously with one-time funds. The projects identified reflected a three-year funding need, totaling \$14.4 million. The UBAC recommended setting aside the university's central reserves of \$20 million to meet the matching funds requirement (approximately 22%) imposed by the CSU Chancellor's Office in order to proceed with construction of a new science building (\$91million total). The plan to apply the reserves to new construction effectively depleted the resources normally available for one-time facility improvement projects. However, the institution was planning, as part of a comprehensive campaign, to fundraise \$20 million toward the construction of the science building, thereby allowing the restoration of the reserves. In the absence of a successful fundraising effort, the institution faces more immediate health and safety risks. Further, the expectation that Sacramento State must provide matching funds of this magnitude for critically needed new construction, long-term prospects for replacing, repairing and upgrading an aging infrastructure, including classroom technology, raised a number of questions. Deferred maintenance needs would be further exacerbated and more costly to repair in the future (CFR 3.5).

Sacramento State's organizational structure allowed leadership to operate with integrity and accountability (CFR 3.6). Decision-making processes were inclusive of the entire campus community, as evidenced through development of its Strategic Plan, implementation of the CSU

Student Success and Completion Initiative, and budget process. There was clear documentation of structures and processes to facilitate the achievement of institutional priorities (CFR 3.7). A full-time Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and full-time Chief Financial Officer (CFO) managed a sufficient number of administrators to lead the institution in fulfilling the educational mission and achieving educational effectiveness (CFR 3.8).

At Sacramento State, academic leadership by the faculty was evident through its engagement and representation on various governance committees, both academic and administrative. With respect to academics, faculty were engaged in curriculum, department, and student-learning outcome decisions. The faculty also engaged in university-wide initiatives and decision-making groups, such as the UBAC, and in graduation initiatives and strategic planning (CFR 3.10).

During the accreditation visit, staff demonstrated considerable enthusiasm and support for the campus, and a very strong commitment to student success. The fact that a significant proportion of the staff identified themselves as proud alumni provided a clear explanation for the very strong loyalty to the institution. The team commended the campus for its shared commitment and dedication to student success.

Standard 4. Sacramento State's OIR collected data, conducted data analysis, identified trends, and developed reports, which were available on the website. Recent organizational changes had resulted in improvements in OIR's effectiveness in disseminating accurate and consistent data (CFR 4.1, 4.2).

The program assessment process included academic program review guidelines that articulated timelines, roles and responsibilities, and self-study requirements, including graduation

and retention rates, curriculum, and student learning outcomes for each degree program (CFR 4.1).

The CTL provided workshops for faculty on various topics such as curriculum design, peer programs, data analytics, and service learning (CFR 4.4). The CTL coupled these efforts with an assessment process that utilized technology (SharePoint) to promote and facilitate faculty involvement, team collaboration, and project management for the purpose of assessing student learning and success (CFR 4.3).

OIR conducted annual surveys of stakeholders including faculty, staff, students and alumni as part of institutional effectiveness efforts. Annual surveys included the first year student experience, campus climate, graduating students, alumni satisfaction, and community leaders. The community leaders' survey examined the university's impact on economic development and public policy (CFR 4.5).

The 2014-2020 Strategic Plan process included discovery, discussion, development, and implementation. It included input from multiple constituencies and resulted in the articulation of mission and vision and value statements. These statements reflected important institutional themes to set a context for the development of strategic goals, indicators of achievement, and specific strategies (CFR 4.6).

The strategic goals outlined in the plan focused on improving student learning outcomes and success; faculty teaching, scholarship, and research; community engagement; and, improving the quality of life in the workplace and classrooms through facilities and technology. One of the highest priorities was implementation of the CSU Student Success and Completion Initiative, intended to improve retention, time to degree, and graduation rates. A recently completed Master Plan laid out a vision for the future development of the physical space on

campus. Budget development processes became more inclusive of major stakeholders and more transparent to the campus community. Funding priorities also appeared to align more closely with strategic plan goals. Challenges in the external environment, however, included diminishing state funding for operating and capital budgets and increasing mandatory costs, such as those for health benefits. Continued pressure to address on-going demands for increased student access and improved graduation rates also provided challenges. Sacramento State's leadership appeared to recognize these challenges, strengthening its capacity to collect and analyze data in response to the changing environment (CFR 4.7).

Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators. The educational effectiveness indicators appeared in an appendix to the institutional report. Departmental assessment and program review reports were available through links to the campus's website. Evidence provided in the appendix points to an accreditation and program review process under development, providing evidence of progress and results for only a few areas.

Component 3: Degree Programs: Meaning, quality, and integrity of the degree

President Robert S. Nelsen had adopted a student-centered approach, assuming ownership and accountability for programs and assisting student success. Among these were efforts to increase graduation rates, decrease time to degree, implement an online degree plan, develop a pathway for students to graduate in four years, and develop initiatives to close the achievement gap for underrepresented students. Notable among these efforts were the addition of more than 10,000 seats in fall 2016, a funding increase of nearly two million dollars in 2015-2016 for various initiatives, a four-year graduation promise to undergraduate students, and incorporation of a wide-range of High-Impact Practices (HIPs) into students' educational experience (CFRs 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 2.10-13).

The institutional report documented exploration of the meaning of a Sacramento State degree. A working group, Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of the Degree (MQID), formed in late 2014, presented its “meaning statements” in October 2015. It identified five core areas (institutional report, page 16):

- The undergraduate experience and baccalaureate learning goals.
- The graduate experience and graduate learning goals.
- Experiential education.
- Equity, diversity, and inclusive excellence.
- Commitment to a sustainable environment.

The institution launched a range of specific initiatives to promote these five areas. For Experiential Learning, for instance, there were initiatives in tutoring/mentoring, undergraduate research, internships, and service learning (CFRs 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13). For equity, diversity, and inclusive excellence, the institution created Professional Learning Communities and Faculty Learning Communities. It also created a Student Academic Success and Educational Equity Program, and incorporated diversity and inclusion throughout the curriculum, most notably through its GE Race and Ethnicity requirement.

The CSU Student Success and Completion Initiative presented a challenge for Sacramento State in defining the meaning, quality, and integrity of its degrees. The metrics used by the campus to measure graduation rates and student success appeared to emphasize the speed at which students graduate, or, perhaps, the speed at which Sacramento State produced diplomas to meet state requirements. There was no explicit reference to the quality of degrees in the institutional report. This focus on *quantity* of graduates may run into conflict with the *quality* of the degree these graduates will bring to the workforce (CFR 2.1).

The team felt that the dimensions identified by the MQID captured some uniqueness of a Sacramento State educational experience, but it suggested that further work be done arrive at a more coherent definition of the meaning of a Sacramento State degree (CFR 2.2).

Component 4: Educational Quality: Student learning, core competencies, and standards of performance at graduation

Essay 2 provided an overview of the university's student learning, core competencies, and standards of performance at graduation. Since the last accreditation review in 2009, the university had taken seriously the structure, learning goals, and assessment of the curriculum, and had initiated a formal assessment of the GE program. The institution had a well-established annual process for program assessment, with departments analyzing data and making recommendations for curricular improvement. The structure for GE assessment included alignment with the California Education Code and CSU system-wide general education learning outcomes, the latter including the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes. In addition, the university had approved recommendations to enhance the GE program: reduction of units in the social sciences area, alignment of lab courses to meet graduation requirements, and simplification of various sub areas. Campus-wide discussions about the GE program appeared to have been fruitful and productive. In addition, the faculty senate had approved an assessment policy to oversee the new structure (CFR 2.2a, 2.3, 2.4).

Following GE program restructuring, the university adopted a five-year assessment plan and created various committees to oversee assessment policies and procedures; however, the implementation of these assessment bodies was unclear. The university acknowledged that, "...effective implementation will require building a cadre of faculty members in all areas who

are able and willing to engage in the ongoing work of assessing the GE program... Although the university is making some progress on GE assessment, the need for greater enhancements to the process to achieve continuous improvements in the quality of the GE program is evident.” As such, the university must engage in proactive measures, driven by faculty and endorsed by the administration, to build its culture and practice of GE assessment and to ensure the quality of the core academic curriculum (CFR 2.2a).

The university also had undertaken efforts to innovate the full undergraduate program. Some notable examples included the Global and Multicultural Perspectives course sequence, the faculty learning community focused on “Wicked Problems: Innovative Curricular Design,” Academic Learning Collaboratives, and first-year high impact programs. The university had recently begun implementation of these initiatives, but the team felt that further time and effort would be required to ensure full integration of these innovations across the university’s teaching and assessment activities, beyond pilot innovations in a few departments. As previously noted, increased faculty buy-in, as well as consistent campus support and messaging, would be required to advance the university’s efforts toward continuous improvement, innovation, and quality degree programs. At the time of the review, consistent forms of assessment and evidence-based decision-making were emergent in pockets of the academic curriculum, but were not yet formalized as an institutional priority, or recognized as a central component of student success (CFR 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6).

To address the Core Competencies, the university had begun to assess student performance in three areas: written communication, critical thinking, and information literacy. The university had established assessment of written communication through pre-existing writing placement exams and the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement. Pilot

implementation of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) and rubrics had provided some assessment of critical thinking and information literacy; however, preliminary examination of student work and results yielded very limited information regarding student performance when aggregated at the university level (CFR 2.4, 2.5, 2.6).

It was evident to the team that the university had begun to think seriously about the delivery of its GE program and undergraduate curriculum. The team suggested that the university could do more to knit together curricular improvement (including, for example, course redesign and pedagogical innovation), academic assessment, and institutional data, as critical components of student success. Such measures would help identify student performance benchmarks for mastery of academic content in their majors, and more broadly contribute to the quality and integrity of undergraduate degrees at the institution (CFR 2.3).

The team recommended that, as part of the institution's efforts to address student success, the provost should work actively with deans, associate deans, department chairs, and the Faculty Senate to ensure that the curriculum is a core component of student success. The team suggested that mechanisms to ensure academic quality should be part of any activities that support student success (CFR 2.2a, 2.3).

Component 5: Student Success: Student learning, retention, and graduation

The university's student success efforts addressed its most significant challenges: student learning, retention, and graduation. At the time of review, less than half of entering freshmen (46%) had completed the degree within 6 years, and about three-quarters (71%) of transfer students had completed degrees within four years. The four- and two-year graduation rates for freshmen and transfer students were markedly lower, at 9% and 26% respectively (CFR 2.10).

Essay 3 stated, “Upon arrival, President Nelsen quickly refocused the institution’s efforts to substantially improve graduation rates.” The university strengthened a variety of pre-existing programs and supported new student success efforts in order to improve the university’s graduation rates. These included enhanced advising strategies; college and transfer readiness programs; integrated enrollment management planning; centralized data collection and analysis services; and tutoring/mentoring services. Moreover, a Graduation Ecosystem integrated an array of eAdvising tools, such as interactive student degree planning software, progress to degree (P2D) reporting, a financial aid tracker, course demand analytics, and other technological initiatives. The institution implemented additional student support services to increase student engagement in co-curricular and academic support programs and to provide a more welcoming environment for the university’s highly diverse student population (CFR 2.10).

It was clear to the team that the university had made significant investments to improve graduation rates and had positioned itself as a safe and welcoming environment for students to learn and thrive. Yet, despite the many efforts in place, there appeared to be limited faculty engagement or integration of these efforts in the academic curriculum. Many of the campus’ efforts to improve student success focused primarily on average units earned, or on retention and graduation rates. The team felt that the campus should undertake deeper and more intensive efforts focused on the quality of academic curriculum in order to improve student academic outcomes, such as mastery of course content in gateway courses and upper-division courses in the major. In addition, the team suggested that the university should consider a cohesive strategy to integrate “wrap-around services” (for example, peer mentoring and intrusive advising) with curricular innovation to ensure student success, and place additional emphasis on course-based, academic interventions to improve student success, such as supplemental instruction or active

learning strategies in gateway STEM courses. Research studies and examples at other campuses have shown these interventions to be effective in advancing student success; such efforts require faculty buy-in and professional development (CFR 2.13).

Finally, although the university acknowledged its historically low graduation rates, it provided little reflection on how these rates evolved over time. The team suggested that sustained self-reflection, institutional data collection and assessment, identification and support for the most effective practices, and further curricular innovation would be critical to achieving Sacramento State's ambitious goals for increasing graduation rates (CFR 2.10).

Consolidation of Data Sources. To strengthen data availability and analysis in support of the graduation initiative, President Nelsen moved OIR's reporting line from OAA to the Executive Director of University Initiatives and Student Success. This move emphasized the importance of data analysis and interpretation to support student success. The team noted, however, that university had not consolidated its data sources, with Information Resources & Technology (IRT) maintaining responsibility for transactional reports in the Cognos data warehouse, while OIR was responsible primarily for census reports compiled as part of CSU requirements. Through interviews with various groups on campus, the team noted that this had led to inconsistency and confusion among data users as to where to go to get information, a lack of confidence as to data accuracy, and a general impression that data were not available to support decision-making and initiatives. The team suggested that the institution identify one area responsible for data accuracy and integrity, analysis and reporting, and dissemination to campus users. This would help clarify processes and generate confidence in the availability and accuracy of data for various initiatives, particularly student completion initiatives, and make data more useful for decision making across the campus. This would become more important as the campus

bring data analytics systems on line that IT would populate regularly with large amounts of data from the student information systems and other sources.

The team recommended that the institution develop structures and processes to centralize data systems and sources to ensure consistency, accuracy, and accessibility of data for the entire campus community. It should identify one unit as the central source of institutional data, charged with collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating information in support of decision-making (CFR 1.2, 2.10, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3).

Component 6: Quality Assurance and Improvement: Program review, assessment, use of data and evidence

The institution's system of quality assurance and improvement included three elements: GE assessment, program review, and academic unit assessment.

GE assessment. To address concerns about GE assessment expressed in previous accreditation reviews and institutional self-reflection, Sacramento State created the General Education Assessment Policy in 2014. According to this policy, Area Assessment Groups (AAG) were responsible for assessment of GE. Coordinators of the five area groups comprised an Area Assessment Coordinator Council (AACC), which provided oversight to assessment activities. At the time of the review, all five areas had created learning goals and outcomes and had drafted five-year assessment plans (CFR 2.2a, 2.2b).

The institution had undertaken substantial work on GE assessment since 2013, particularly a campus-wide, faculty-driven endeavor to draft GE area learning outcomes and create five-year assessment plans. These efforts had set the institution on the right track in GE assessment, an important component in the assurance of quality of academic programs.

With the architecture for GE assessment in place, the institution was poised to carry out assessment activities. The team encouraged the institution to keep GE assessment in the forefront of its efforts to ensure academic quality, engaging the faculty and others in data collection, data analysis, and program improvement based on assessment findings.

The team recommended that the institution implement a coherent and systematic academic and general education assessment plan that includes assessment of all five of the core competencies, engaging in regular data collection, analysis, and implementation of recommendations (that is, “closing the loop”). Such activities should be faculty driven and endorsed by the university administration. Institutional implementation would ensure continuous improvement of the undergraduate curriculum and advance the overall quality of the degree (CFR 2.2a, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6).

Program Review. APROC, comprised of members selected from the faculty and one outside consultant, governed the program review process, with details of the process spelled out in the Program Review Manual. The manual was an 11-page, single-spaced document outlining every aspect of the program review process. APROC was responsible for reviewing the institution’s programs, ensuring that governance of program review was centralized and that all programs followed the same standards.

Program reviews were required to include assessment, following specific stipulations on presenting assessment in the report, including learning outcomes, assessment methods, summary of assessment activities, and findings. APROC provided the final review, working together with the academic unit and its dean, the university assessment committee, and others involved in the process. The team suggested including an action plan that would outline what the department/program will do to address the findings of the review process.

Based on the few available reviews conducted under the new policy, the quality of program review had shown improvement over past practice. The team felt that this new policy and process would lead to better quality assurance and program improvement. At the time of the review, however, programs were not following the schedule; difficulties in forming the PRC had contributed to this delay. The committee had not completed program reviews for 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, and had delayed reviews of 11 programs scheduled in 2015-2016 for one year, until 2016-2017.

The team urged the institution to continue to refine its policy and procedures on program review and to ensure that it reviewed programs according to schedule. It suggested that the academic program review include external engagement, accountability through an MOU and action plan that leads to results, and clear involvement of faculty through the Faculty Senate. The team recommended formation of review committees comprised entirely of external reviewers, with the active involvement of Faculty Senate to provide input before and after the review. The team felt that the investment in this effort was worth the cost, even if the result would be less frequent reviews (CFR 2.7, 3.3, 4.1).

Academic unit level Assessment. The third mechanism of the institution's assessment of its programs was the annual academic unit assessment. Evidence provided in the report showed that the process: a) had a well-designed structure, with standardized templates used at all levels of the process; b) was "bottom-up;" c) was well integrated and coherent; and, d) had been implemented. These assessment activities provided a wealth of information for assessment and program improvement. The team commended the institution for its consistent effort and notable accomplishment in this area of assessment (CFR 2.6, 2.7).

Component 7: Sustainability: Financial viability, preparing for the changing higher education environment

Sacramento State adapted to a changing higher education environment by launching efforts to improve poor graduation rates, focusing more on retention efforts and increasing diversity and inclusion. There was evidence of a more integrated approach to data collection and analysis, and increased involvement of stakeholders in the budget process (CFR 4.5, 4.6). These efforts informed the 2014-2020 Strategic Plan and helped to align the funding of institutional priorities (CFR 3.4).

One area of increasing concern at the time of the review was with facilities maintenance and new construction. The State of California no longer provided bond financing for academic facilities in the CSU, and Sacramento State's campus was aging, with need for significant repair, replacement, and upgrade. The master plan showed that a number of the campus facilities built between 1950 and 1970 were in need of modernization. Capital financing capacity was limited; the university needs a comprehensive approach to remedy an increasingly difficult matter for campuses to address (CFR 3.5).

Component 9: Reflection and plans for improvement

Overall, Sacramento State was honest about its situation at the time of the review and about the challenges it faced in moving forward toward its objectives. Its primary emphasis was to remain student centric and its primary goal was to improve retention and four-year graduation rates. The university was honest about how urgently it needed these improvements and it was realistic about how quickly it could achieve its goals. The team was particularly impressed by the enthusiastic buy-in toward these goals among all constituencies, including faculty, staff, and

students. However, the team was concerned that the campus not sacrifice educational quality in order to achieve these goals. It appeared that the university was still in need of well-defined plans to assess the success of its programs to improve the four-year graduation rate and to decrease the graduation gap (CFR 2.10, 4.1).

As a part of its commitment to the student experience, the university plans to build more housing for students on campus. In addition, it is proud of its status as the most sustainable CSU campus within the 23-member system. It is noteworthy that Sacramento State strongly encourages student leadership and student participation in its sustainability efforts around campus.

The team felt that the university had begun the process of developing a new general education curriculum that was faculty driven. It also conveyed a strong commitment to outreach and plans to redouble its efforts.

Sacramento State also had plans to build on its significant minority population, which comprised 70% of the student body. As mentioned earlier, it has HSI status, receiving federal grants from the Department of Education. The institution recognized that the diversity of its faculty had not improved as quickly as it might have wished, and consequently, it put in place a number of nationally recognized best practices for improving the diversity of the faculty (CFR 3.1). However, the institutional report provided no discussion of the equally important issue of the distribution of faculty diversity across campus.

The team detected a level of insularity within the campus, perhaps driven by its long history and traditions. Generally, the team felt that Sacramento State would greatly benefit from better understanding the practices and policies within other CSU campuses.

After some turnover, the campus hired a new provost, who was the chief academic officer at the time of the review. It notes, however, that responsibility for faculty personnel matters resided with human resources, rather than in OAA. Generally, the team felt that the provost must be empowered to have control over the academic programs and initiatives on campus. In particular, the provost has purview over academic personnel, and the team recommended that the provost have staff who directly report to her and could support her decision-making authority over hiring, retention, and promotion of faculty. Such staff would be key to her responsibility to improve faculty diversity, as well as the distribution of diversity across the campus (CFR 3.2, 3.7, 3.10).

Overall, the team felt that the university's plans for the future were ambitious and clearly worthwhile. With new leadership well established, the team anticipated that the campus would make substantial progress toward its goals.

SECTION IV – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The team wished to thank President Nelsen and his leadership team and the entire Sacramento State community for its hospitality and openness during the visit. In particular, the team extended its appreciation to Don Taylor, ALO, Jackie Donath, Chair of the WASC Committee, and Kathy Mine, assistant to Dr. Taylor, for their help with all aspects of the visit.

The university fulfilled the intended outcomes for the comprehensive review and the team found that the review process had made an impact on the institution through self-reflection and identification of areas needing improvement.

Commendations

- The university has made a commitment to student success as its core mission.
- The university has made a commitment to diversity and inclusion and a commitment to closing retention and graduation rate gaps for underserved and underrepresented students through the establishment of programs and services to support these efforts.
- The new leadership team has garnered strong support and has proven to be an agent of change that has catalyzed improvement in every area of the institution.
- The university has taken advantage of its location in the capital to institute academic and co-curricular programs related to state government.
- The report was honest about challenges; its development included broad representation on the steering committee.
- Infrastructure and policies are in place for assessment of general education and for program assessment across the curriculum.
- The budget process is consultative, transparent, and aligned with the strategic plan.
- There is a high level of engagement and enthusiasm in the university community.
- The team commends the Faculty Senate's movement toward appointment of a student success task force that will empower faculty voices.

Recommendations

1. The university should continue to refine its policy and procedures on program review and ensure that it reviews programs according to schedule. The academic program

- review should include external engagement, accountability through an MOU and action plan that leads to results, and clear involvement of faculty through the Faculty Senate. The team recommends formation of review committees comprised entirely of external reviewers, with the active involvement of Faculty Senate to provide input before and after the review. The team feels that the investment in this effort is worth the cost, even if the result is less frequent reviews. (CFR 2.7, 3.3, 4.1.)
2. In particular, the provost has purview over academic personnel and should be encouraged to have staff who directly report to her who can support her decision-making authority over hiring, retention, and promotion of faculty. Such staff would be key to her responsibility to improve faculty diversity, as well as the distribution of diversity across the campus. (CFR 3.1, 3.2, 3.10.)
 3. As part of the institution's efforts to address student success, the provost should work actively with deans, associate deans, department chairs, and the Faculty Senate to ensure that the curriculum is a core component of student success. Mechanisms to ensure academic quality should be part of any activities that support student success. (CFR 2.2a, 2.3.)
 4. The institution should develop structures and processes to centralize data systems and sources to ensure consistency, accuracy, and accessibility of data for the entire campus community. It should identify one unit as the central source of institutional data, charged with collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating information in support of decision-making. (CFR 1.2, 2.10, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3.)
 5. The institution should implement a coherent and systematic academic and general education assessment plan that includes assessment of all five of the core

competencies, engaging in regular data collection, analysis, and implementation of recommendations (that is, “closing the loop”). Such activities should be faculty driven and endorsed by the university administration. Institutional implementation will ensure continuous improvement of the undergraduate curriculum and advance the overall quality of the degree. (CFR 2.2a, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6.)

6. It is clear that the university website needs considerable improvement in order to best support campus efforts to improve student success. The team strongly supports the efforts now underway and encourages the campus to complete the establishment of governance mechanisms, and to make these upgrades a resource priority. (CFR 1.6, 2.12.)

APPENDICES

A. Federal Compliance Forms


1. Credit Hour Review
2. Marketing and Recruitment Review
3. Student Complaint Review
4. Transfer Policy Review

1 - CREDIT HOUR AND PROGRAM LENGTH REVIEW FORM

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections as appropriate.)
Policy on credit hour	Is this policy easily accessible? x YES 0 NO
	If so, where is the policy located? http://www.csus.edu/acaf/academic%20resources/policies%20and%20procedures/credit%20hour%20polic.html
	Comments:
Process(es)/ periodic review of credit hour	Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)? x YES 0 NO http://www.csus.edu/acaf/class%20scheduling/advanced%20class%20scheduling%20manual.html
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? x YES 0 NO
	Comments:
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? x YES 0 NO
	Comments: http://www.csus.edu/acaf/class%20scheduling/advanced%20class%20scheduling%20manual.html
Sample syllabi or equivalent for online and hybrid courses Please review at least 1 2 from each degree level.	How many syllabi were reviewed? 23
	What kind of courses (online or hybrid or both)? Both
	What degree level(s)? 0 AA/AS x BA/BS x MA 0 Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Economics, Education, Environmental Studies, Family and Consumer Sciences, Geology, Psychology (additional syllabi available upon request)
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? x YES 0 NO
	Comments:
	How many syllabi were reviewed? 16
	What kinds of courses? Practicum, field study, thesis, cooperative research, labs

	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
not meet for the prescribed hours (e.g., internships, labs, clinical, independent study, accelerated) Please review at least 1 2 from each degree level.	What discipline(s)? Education, Environmental Studies, Family and Consumer Sciences, Psychology, Anthropology (additional syllabi available upon request)
	Does this material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:
Sample program information (catalog, website, or other program materials)	How many programs were reviewed?
	What kinds of programs were reviewed?
	What degree level(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> AA/AS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BA/BS <input type="checkbox"/> MA <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral
	What discipline(s)? Listing of all academic programs at: www.catalog.csus.edu/academic-programs/
	Does this material show that the programs offered at the institution are of a generally acceptable length? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Comments:

Review Completed by:
Date:

By: 
4/12/2017

2 - MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices.

Material Reviewed	Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.
* *Federal regulations	Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students? x YES 0 NO www.csus.edu/admissions
	Comments:
Degree completion and cost	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? X YES 0 NO http://catalog.csus.edu/financial-information/fees-refunds/ http://www.csus.edu/umannual/acadaff/fsu00010.htm
	Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? x YES 0 NO http://csus.edu/aba/bursars-office/fees deadlines refunds.html
	comments:
Careers and employment	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? x YES 0 NO Types of jobs are noted in the catalog in each department section.
	Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? x YES 0 NO http://www.csus.edu/careercenter/
	Comments:

*§602.16(a)(1)(vii)

* *Section 487 (a)(20) of the Higher Education Act (HEA) prohibits Title IV eligible institutions from providing incentive compensation to employees or third party entities for their success in securing student enrollments.

Incentive compensation includes commissions, bonus payments, merit salary adjustments, and promotion decisions based solely on success in enrolling students. These regulations do not apply to the recruitment of international students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive Federal financial aid.

Completed By: Steven H Garcia
4/12/17

3 - STUDENT COMPLAINTS REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's student complaints policies, procedures, and records.

<p>Material Reviewed</p>	<p>Questions/comments {Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)</p>
<p>Policy on student complaints</p>	<p>Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? x YES O NO</p>
	<p>If so, is the policy or procedure easily accessible? Is so, where? http://csus.edu/umannual/hr/hrs-0128.htm; http://www.csus.edu/umannual(student/stu-0119.htm http://www.csus.edu/umannual/student/stu-0110.htm http://www.csus.edu/umannual/acad%20affairs/gradeappealpolicy.htm http://www.csus.edu/acaf/academic%20resources/forms/students/gradeappealprocess2015.pdf</p>
	<p>Comments:</p>
<p>Process(es)/ procedure</p>	<p>Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? x YES O NO If so, please describe briefly: All the policies above also include the processes and procedures.</p>
	<p>If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? x YES O NO</p>
	<p>Comments:</p>
<p>Records</p>	<p>Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? x YES O NO If so, where? It depends on what type of complaint. Records are the responsibility of the unit that handles that particular issue.</p>

	Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? x YES O NO
	<p>If so, please describe briefly: The unit handling the issue would following the student records retention schedule.</p> <p>http://www.csus.edu/aba/recordsmanagement/documents/retention-schedules/student records 3final.pdf</p> <p>http://www.csus.edu/umannual/admin/umr15053.htm</p> <p>Comments:</p>

*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Complaints and Third Party Comment Policy.

Completed By: *Stewart*
4/13/17

4 - TRANSFER CREDIT POLICY REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulations*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices accordingly.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Transfer Credit Policy(s)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? x YES 0 NO
	If so, is the policy publically available? x YES 0 NO If so, where? http://www.csus.edu/registrar/transfer credit/
	Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? x YES 0 NO http://www.csus.edu/umannual/acadlumt17125.htm
	Comments:

*§602.24(e): Transfer of credit policies. The accrediting agency must confirm, as part of its review for renewal of accreditation, that the institution has transfer of credit policies that--

- (1) Are publicly disclosed in accordance with 668.43(a)(11); and
- (2) Include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission's Transfer of Credit Policy.

Review Completed By:

Date:


4/12/2017