



California State University, Sacramento
Office of the President
6000 J Street • Sacramento Hall 206 • Sacramento, CA 95819-6022
T (916) 278-7737 • F (916) 278-6959 • www.csus.edu

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Jamienne S. Studley
President
WASC Senior College and University Commission
985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100
Alameda, CA 94501

Dear President Studley:

This letter serves as Sacramento State's progress report as required by the accreditation action letter issued on June 30, 2020.

Recommendation 1: Continued work to refine and improve the program review process including ensuring consistency in scheduling and engagement of external constituents. (CFR 2.7, 3.3, 4.1.)

Sacramento State considered ways to weave in more reflection, analysis, external perspectives, context, communication, and collaboration into its academic program review process in order to enhance planning and decision-making. Changes have been proposed throughout the process. First, the department review proposal is being replaced by an interactive orientation that structures a review that considers each degree offered. The interactive orientation is intended to engage all program faculty; encourages reflection and analysis; allows for quick adjustments for on-time completion; and emphasizes that one size does not fit all when it comes to academic program review. Second, flexible self-study templates are being incorporated to allow each degree program to highlight what the faculty gleaned from assessments efforts; detail progress made to maintain success and improve student learning; summarize student success challenges; and suggest options to overcome challenges and operationalize desired improvements. Third, the review is the responsibility of external experts, and the number of experts required have been increased from one to two. External reviewers are to review and make recommendations. External reviewers would also serve as expert consultants to consider ways to maintain success and consider needed improvements via the campus visit. Fourth, campus peers now review self-studies, and external reviewer reports not to affirm or make degree specific recommendations, but to provide context, connections, and suggestions to help programs consider ways to overcome challenges and operationalize desired actions. Fourth, the culmination of the process does not end with reports to, and responses from, a department, but rather an action plan for each degree. The external and internal input serves as the basis for the department to create an action plan for each degree program in conjunction with the college dean. The action plan must be intentional, student-centered, and must contain actionable goals that can be used as a road map with deadlines and responsible parties. The agreed upon action plan(s) will then be presented to the Faculty Senate for approval. The action plans are to be used to monitor progress and shared across departments,

colleges, and divisions to provide information on common challenges and opportunities to inform strategic planning, budgeting, partnerships, and progress on campus-wide initiatives. Most importantly, administrative and financial support for the program review process will incentivize new values and on-time completion of each step.

Although the revised Academic Program Review Policy is still pending Faculty Senate approval, all programs scheduled to begin program review in Fall 2019 volunteered to test the proposed process. Outstanding program reviews have been completed and affirmed by the Faculty Senate. The program review schedule is now up to date and will be posted along with the most recent action plan for each degree upon Faculty Senate approval of the revised policy.

Recommendation 2. Ensure that the provost has adequate staff to support her roles and responsibilities, including the hiring and development of faculty. (CFR 3.1, 3.2, 3.10.)

The Division of Academic Affairs has undergone a reorganization to better align planning, operations, and budget to achieve its mission. Concurrent vacancies in the Provost, Vice Provost, and Associate Vice President for Faculty Affairs allowed the Provost to create two Vice Provost positions, one that focuses on the hiring, retention, and development of faculty and one that focuses on planning and strategic initiatives. Under the leadership of the Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement, the newly formed Office of Faculty Advancement (OFA) has been able to focus exclusively on faculty HR-related issues. These include more focused oversight of hiring, onboarding and orientation, and stronger alignment with our Center for Teaching and Learning. Working with partners in the Division of Inclusive Excellence, OFA has been able to update and offer more trainings on diversity and inclusion through the hiring process and provided more support to faculty search committees. The New Faculty Orientation has been expanded and revitalized, and OFA has recently started an orientation for new lecturers. Finally, OFA has instituted monthly hour-long development sessions for Department Chairs and Program Directors. Sacramento State has hired approximately 250 new tenure-track hires since 2016, and another 32 tenure-track faculty will join for the 2020-21 academic year. These hires have moved the needle on faculty representation toward that of our student body and community. Under the leadership of the Vice Provost for Strategic Services, Sacramento State has been able to partner with Sierra Community College to develop a plan for a learning site in nearby Placer County; expand the footprint of Sacramento State's innovation and entrepreneurship activities in the Sacramento region; connect community partners with the University's community engagement efforts through robust service learning and academic internship programs; and coordinate instructional technology resources.

Recommendation 3. Continue to address student success through the active collaboration of the provost, deans, associate deans, department chairs, and the Faculty Senate. (CFR 2.2a, 2.3.)

Academic Affairs has very intentionally focused opportunities to address student success challenges. The Provost expanded the membership of the Academic Affairs Leadership Team to include more than just the college deans, and scheduled more frequent meetings to share successes, connect to expertise outside Academic Affairs, and ponder common student success challenges. This model was then used to establish a community of practice for the associate deans, and develop member driven agendas for the monthly chairs and directors meeting. The Associate Deans have tackled items such as working with the Division of Student Affairs to create college student success centers,

the Dean of Undergraduate Studies to implement strategic scheduling for incoming freshman, the Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning to use Platinum Analytics to improve data-driven decisions about course scheduling; and the College of Continuing Education to rapidly modify summer schedules as stay at home orders were extended. The chairs and directors have learned about mental health services and modeled real world scenarios with experts; considered the wide range available options for affordable learning materials; and discussed how the College of Arts and Letters structured schedule experience might translate to the other colleges and impact those departments that provide courses in general education. Additionally, the Office of the President hired a Director of Policy and Records Management to aid the Faculty Senate and campus units with policy revisions to facilitate student learning and success. Some key changes include stronger collaboration between previously siloed divisions, greater focus on the implications of campus policy on student success, and an awareness that access to clear, and findable, policy benefits all campus stakeholders. Recent examples include the development of a Credit for Prior Learning Policy and a major revision to the Academic Advising Policy.

Recommendation 4. Develop structures and processes to centralize data reporting systems to ensure consistency, accuracy, and accessibility of data for the entire campus community. (CFR 1.2, 2.10, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3.) This includes the establishment of governance mechanisms and the dedication of resources for ongoing maintenance. (CFR 1.6, 2.12.)

To assist Sacramento State Leadership in using accurate data to make informed decisions the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) was moved under the Office of the President and subsequently evolved into the Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning (OIREP). This restructuring to OIREP as the central source of institutional data has enabled standardization of data and its collection methods, validation, analysis, accessibility and accuracy of reporting to both internal and external stakeholders, CSU Chancellors Office (CO), and the community at large. This centralized approach to data has allowed OIREP to access data from different resource areas, analyze and report it to maximize effectiveness.

OIREP has ventured into data visualization by converting the traditional institutional Factbook into interactive dashboards with drill down capabilities. This conversion allows for data exploration and access to nontechnical users to explore the benefits of data trends and promote a better understanding of the data. Additionally, OIREP is partnering with Faculty Data Fellows from all of the colleges to mine the institutional data and make recommendations for improving data driven decision making. Sacramento State is further leveraging OIREP's expertise in supporting the Graduation Initiative by focusing on Student Learning, Academic Progress, Student Well Being, and Labor Market Outcomes with extensive University-wide collaboration.

A collaborative data foundation has been laid with vital partnerships across campus including Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Information Resources and Technology, Faculty Senate, Faculty Advancement, Academic Assessment, Associate Students Inc., Student Success Centers, Administration and Business Affairs, to name a few. Through the Data Continuity Initiative, OIREP confers with Information Resources and Technology, Academic Affairs, and Student Affairs in establishing and maintaining consistent data processes in standard practice in data acquisition, storage, retrieval, analysis, and reporting. These efforts further the efficiency and effectiveness of data in informing University-wide decision-making.

Recommendation 5. Continue to refine and implement a general education assessment plan that includes regular data collection, analysis, and implementation of recommendations. (CFR 2.2a, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6.)

Undergraduate General Education

The AV Team report 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 university had established assessment of written communication through pre-existing writing placement exams and the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement. Pilot 20 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).

As noted in Recommendation 3, Sacramento State had a number of vacant positions and interim administrators in the Provost's Office in the period before and after the accreditation visit. One key vacant position was the Dean of Undergraduate Studies. The position was filled with an administrator who had extensive experience with assessment and implementing data driven change in General Education. He has worked with the Faculty Senate's General Education and Graduation Requirements Committee to reimagine General Education as more than a series of courses that are approved into the buckets provided by the CSU General Education policy. The committee first discussed what general outcomes students should meet before graduation, and how these outcomes mapped to the outdated Baccalaureate Learning Goals and general learning outcomes across majors. The committee also considered when, where, how, and why general learning outcome assessment was happening across undergraduate degrees. The committee agreed that the Baccalaureate Learning Goals were not measurable outcomes, which made alignment, assessment, analysis, and continuous improvement planning difficult. The committee also agreed that assessment and analysis was not happening systematically, nor was it making its way back to the committee or decision makers. Therefore, efforts were focused on data collection, analysis, and improvement plans for the five core competencies plus the institution's race/ethnicity graduation requirement. In addition, the campus acquired the Campus Labs Outcomes Module to facilitate course-based assessment that could be aligned to program and general education outcomes to aid analysis and plan development to close the loop. Progress made includes:

- **Written Communication**

The visit report noted that the university had established assessment of written communication through pre-existing writing placement exams and the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement. Pilot 20 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.

Senate approved a writing rubric that will be applied to written assignments across the curriculum. The Offices of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Academic Program Assessment sponsored a Faculty Learning Community to apply the rubric in courses across the

curriculum at the course level by faculty in Canvas. That data is being analyzed as part of general education and the degree to identify strategies that improve learning.

- **Oral Communication, Information Literacy, Critical Thinking, and Quantitative Literacy**

General Education subcommittee created draft rubrics for each of these core competencies, and identified potential assignments across the curriculum in which to apply each rubric. Once each rubric receives Faculty Senate approval, a faculty learning community will be set up to implement the rubric across the curriculum at the course level by faculty in Canvas. That data will then be analyzed as part of general education and the degree to identify strategies that improve learning.

- **Race and Ethnicity**

Sacramento State is hoping to also employ best practices with unique university-wide outcomes. For example, the General Education charged a subcommittee to revise the Race and Ethnicity outcome. The existing outcome was not an outcome, but rather a list of topics to be taught. The subcommittee had a series of meetings to discuss what graduates should be able to demonstrate, and how across the hundred or so courses from a dozen departments that met the race and ethnicity requirement. The draft outcome was approved by the Faculty Senate, and the subcommittee is currently working on a rubric that can be used across the curriculum at the course level by faculty in Canvas.

Graduate Learning Outcomes

In response to the Institutional Graduate Learning Outcome Assessment Plan for communication, critical thinking, and information literacy, the faculty in the graduate community on campus collected and reviewed writing from students in the first year of graduate programs and in the last year of graduate programs for a comparative study of three learning goals that had been assessed independently. Using the samples of students' work and rubrics to assess students' abilities to communicate key knowledge with clarity and purpose both within the discipline and in broader contexts; critically analyze, and demonstrate the ability to obtain, assess, and analyze information from multiple sources, the faculty assessed the artifacts, and determined that changes to the curriculum were needed to provide students with the instruction needed to improve writing.

At the graduate level, faculty continue to engage in continuous improvement practices. The learning goals at the institutional level for the written communication courses were updated, and the campus policy was updated to require that graduate programs no longer rely on a high stakes one-time writing examination. Instead, each graduate program is developing a writing intensive course at the graduate level to immerse graduate students in the discourse of their disciplines: genres, literacies, stylistic conventions, etc. The purpose of the writing intensive courses at the program level is not only to provide the student with practice writing in the discipline or field of study, but also to provide the student with an understanding of the major research and/or professional conventions, practices, and methods of inquiry of the discipline. Programs are actively designing the Graduate Writing Intensive courses with the aim of students mastering the major formats, genres, and styles of writing used in the discipline.

During the 2019-2020 AY, the faculty participated in the review of the graduate learning goal, Disciplinary knowledge. At the start of the assessment process, faculty worked as a group to develop a rubric to use for the assessment activity. The group faced challenges in determining how to frame the descriptive elements related to the mastery, integration, and application of disciplinary knowledge. In subsequent discussions, the faculty worked in disciplinary groups to try and find common elements or dimensions to describe the concept of disciplinary knowledge in terms that could apply at the institutional level and across all disciplines. Unlike with the communication and critical thinking institutional learning goals, the faculty faced challenges identifying a common framework to assess graduate-level disciplinary knowledge at the institutional level. What we learned from the conversations focused on institutional-level assessment of disciplinary knowledge is that cross-disciplinary concepts can be framed at the degree level in broad terms, and the discussions the faculty had were insightful. While the struggle to develop a common rubric was daunting and overwhelming at times, the faculty plan to continue the conversation on disciplinary knowledge by collecting artifacts from the courses graduate programs identified in their curriculum map as areas students should be assessed. The conclusion was that students' development of disciplinary knowledge and skills relevant to current, practical, and important contexts and situations is vital for graduate students. The desire is to continue to engage in these discussions at the institutional level.

Recommendation 6: Improve the university website in order to support campus efforts to improve student success. This includes the establishment of governance mechanisms and the dedication of resources for ongoing maintenance. (CFR 1.6, 2.12.)

The new Sacramento State website was launched on July 5, 2019 and is compliant with federal accessibility regulations. Web management and accessibility monitoring, reporting and remediation responsibilities have been included in five of the Web & Mobile team's position descriptions. The Web & Mobile team holds monthly meetings for web publishers to demonstrate best practices in usability and accessibility.

The Web Content Advisory Group (WCAG) is being formed to establish a framework to develop strategy, standards and policies for digital content management, including csus.edu, the Sac State Mobile App, the campus portal, the campus event calendar, and digital signs. This governance framework will support protection of the Sac State brand and reputation, ensure a user-experience-oriented navigation including accessibility, and ensure the most effective and efficient management strategy. The WCAG shall be comprised of one chair and broad representation for campus-wide stakeholders, including representatives from ASI, Academic Affairs, Faculty Senate, Student Affairs, Advancement, Library, University Communications, College of Continuing Education, Athletics, UEI, IRT and ABA.

Sincerely,



Robert S. Nelson

President