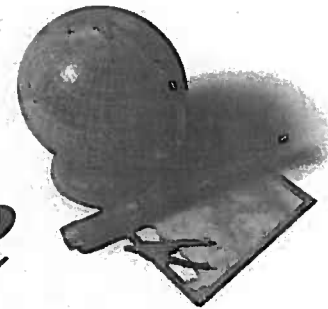


Charting Our Campus Future



WASC Notes

Issue # 1 • Spring 2007
California State University, Fullerton

WASC

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Your Role in Campus Reaccreditation: Help Identify Campus Themes

In a recent letter to the campus, Dr. Ephraim Smith announced the launch of the campus accreditation process. The new accreditation process requires broad campus consultation to identify a small set of themes the campus will research during the reaccreditation process, and this consultation process has already begun. Last fall, we (the WASC Steering Committee) asked department chairs to discuss with their faculty the following questions: *What are the top three things that should matter most to our campus, or that we should pay closest attention to, as we look forward across the next decade? What key words might one use to designate those themes?* Responses from these surveys were compiled and shared with those attending the Academic Affairs Forum in January, where additional topics were identified. We continue to visit various campus groups early this semester to solicit ideas. All faculty, staff, and students will receive an electronic survey in April asking them to rate the various themes resulting from our campus consultations. Through this survey, we will narrow the list to the three or four themes that matter most to the campus at this time. Please complete the survey and help us determine the themes that will guide our reaccreditation review process.

Introducing "WASC Notes"

This is the first in a series of newsletter updates from the WASC Steering Committee intended to keep the campus community up-to-date on our accreditation process. Each issue will describe the ongoing work of the Committee and related task force groups, provide a continuing sense of our progress toward major milestones in the process, and indicate opportunities for members of our campus to become involved in the conversations and reviews that will be taking place as we move through the WASC review process.

Three Phases of the WASC Accreditation Process

- **Institutional Proposal (October 2007)**

Describes the campus and the themes of interest identified by the campus as the focus for our accreditation process. Outlines the information we will collect and analyze in the course of our accreditation to demonstrate our success in relation to these themes.

- **Capacity and Preparatory Review (Spring 2010)**

Reviews the resources, structures, and processes that we have in place to accomplish “what matters” to our campus. Describes the ways in which our campus agrees to change in order to align ourselves even more closely with our institutional goals.

- **Educational Effectiveness Review (Fall 2011)**

Draws on the review and analysis in the capacity and preparatory document to determine how effectively students at CSUF are learning and whether we believe that is good enough. Reports how effectively all of our programs, structures, processes, and activities are working in light of what we have set out as our goals for our students and in what ways we can continue to improve our efforts and accomplishments.

The Purpose of Campus Reaccreditation

Campus wide accreditation is required under the federal Higher Education Act, and takes place at either seven- or ten-year intervals. The accreditation of the entire institution (as opposed to specific programs) provides assurance to the public and other constituencies that the campus has met high standards of quality and effectiveness. It is required for Title IV Eligibility, which allows transferability of credit, recognition of degrees, and access to financial aid for students. Ralph Wolff, the President and Executive Director of WASC, emphasizes that accreditation today is about meaningful inquiry that “tells our distinctive campus story” and charts plans for the future based on the university’s core mission and goals. To effectively achieve those objectives requires broad campus engagement and participation in multiple stages of inquiry-based self-assessment.”

The New WASC Process: Institutional Improvement and Reexamination

For those of us who were at the University during previous periods of reaccreditation, the process, as well as the acronym WASC, may bring to mind the unpleasant notions of being compliant, making assertions and finding proof, collecting masses of evidence from the past for the purposes of constructing the image of someone *else’s* ideal institution.

WASC has refocused the process through which it requires and guides colleges and universities. The new reaccreditation process has been designed with a strong focus on student learning and a concern with accountability, broad campus engagement, focusing attention on learning outcomes, collecting selective data and, most importantly, conducting the entire process in relation to what matters most for our particular university.

In light of this new WASC process, the Steering Committee's first goal is to determine, through numerous small group conversations and by reaching out to as many campus constituencies as possible, *What matters to CSUF? How do we define what we are and what we aspire to be?*

The answer to these questions will provide the lens through which we will look as we conduct and complete our University accreditation. The process of accreditation, then, is no longer an attempt to prove to an outside body of reviewers that *our* University is *their* ideal campus, but to prove to ourselves that we are the campus that *we* want to be and want to become.

What Will Happen in Spring and Fall 2007

During Spring 2007, the Steering Committee will concentrate its efforts on collecting information and perspectives from the campus in order to determine "What Matters to CSUF?" From the various answers to this question will emerge the topics or themes that will focus the remainder of our reaccreditation process. Summer and Fall 2007, the second semester of this initial phase, will be devoted to writing the institutional proposal. Although a relatively brief document, the proposal provides the framework for the remainder of the process and must be submitted to the WASC peer review process.

In order to collect information about what matters to CSUF from as many constituencies as possible and then to group that information into generalizable categories, the Steering Committee has completed or will complete the following:

- ***Fall 2006:***
Initial survey of faculty through department dialogues
- ***January 17, 2007:***
Academic Affairs Forum Discussion Groups (discussion that built on results of broad based survey conducted in Fall 2006)
- ***February-March 2007:***
Constituent Group Outreach Meetings (Department Chairs, College Deans, Associated Students Leadership, Librarians, Academic Senate, Alumni, etc.)
- ***April 2007:***
Campus wide Electronic Survey

As another means by which to engage and involve as much of the campus as possible, we will also be collecting information and perspectives from the following campus-wide discussions:

- Vision Committee on Academic Quality conducted by the Academic Senate
- Facilitating Graduation Review conducted by the Chancellor's office
- Access and Excellence Conversation on March 21st, hosted by Vice Presidents Smith and Anderson
- University Planning Committee established by President Gordon
- Planning, Resources, and Budget Committee (PRBC)
- Redefinition of Roles and Strategic Planning Subcommittee chaired by Bob Koch, Chair, Department of Biology

Where Are We Now? Emerging Themes

We expect, throughout the course of this semester, that the sense of what matters to CSUF, the themes that will provide the focus for the remainder of our accreditation process, will shape and reshape, like the images in a kaleidoscope. With each progressive group from whom we receive reaction and each group from whom we receive subsequent reaction, the themes will slowly and appropriately come into focus.

Initial Emerging Themes

At this point, the following issues have been raised as what should matter on our campus:

- Addressing Needs of Student Learners
- Enhancing Campus Community
- Facilitating Student Success
- Growth and Institutional Quality
- Supporting Faculty and Staff Needs for Effectiveness
- Vision and Growth

Resources for the Campus Community

In addition to future WASC Notes, the campus community can stay informed about the ongoing reaccreditation process by visiting the Reaccreditation website at:

www.fullerton.edu/wasc/. In addition to being a storehouse of information for the current accreditation, this site will also provide access to the previous accreditation report, and the letter written by the WASC visiting team in 2000.

We encourage you to participate in one or more of the campus activities listed in this newsletter, to contact a member of the WASC Steering Committee if you would like to provide input, volunteer to be on a task force, or become more closely involved in this multi-year process.

The process of accreditation, then, is no longer an attempt to prove to an outside body of reviewers that our University is their ideal campus, but to prove to ourselves that we are the campus that we want to be and want to become.