

THE REACCREDITATION PROCESS: CHARTING OUR CAMPUS FUTURE

Report to the Academic Affairs / Academic Senate
Joint Retreat, August 14, 2007

Authors:
The WASC Steering Committee

The university officially launched its multi-year reaccreditation process with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) on January 17, 2007 at the Academic Affairs Forum. The purposes of this briefing paper are to summarize the numerous reaccreditation activities that transpired over the spring and summer of 2007, to share the major findings that emerged from a campuswide electronic survey, and to reiterate the next steps in terms of core requirements, as well as list the milestone documents that must be prepared as part of the reaccreditation process. But first, for the benefit of new Senate members and others it is fruitful to recap the purpose, emphasis, and products under the “new WASC accreditation” procedures.

WASC Process: Redux

First, the university must develop an Institutional Proposal, due October 2007. Then concurrent research and programmatic activities are to address a “Capacity and Preparatory Review” (culminating in a Spring 2010 report) and an “Educational Effectiveness Review” (report by Fall 2011). With each of these last two phases an external review committee will conduct a campus site visit.

The orientation of this institutional accreditation emphasizes the process of collaborative inquiry and **not** the creation of a single product listing campus resources and statistical trends. The purposes of this collaborative inquiry are to tell our distinctive Cal State Fullerton story and to chart plans for the future based on the core mission and goals statements with the end objective being *to achieve improvements in institutional quality*. We will achieve those outcomes through an inquiry-based self-assessment grounded in “researchable questions.” In short, the accreditation process is more about working together to chart the future of Cal State Fullerton than about achieving compliance with WASC.

Because accreditation now is a process with a lengthy time horizon, it will be a challenge to achieve from members of the campus community sustained engagement and interest in the reaccreditation process. One way to approach this challenge is by using existing processes and structures to conduct much of the required activity. Moreover, if the campus community is frequently reminded of the major objective – namely, to make Cal State Fullerton a stronger and higher quality university – then the sustained investment of time and effort will be worthwhile.

Using a WASC resource guide, *The Institutional Proposal and Beyond*, the Steering Committee determined that the special themes approach would be the most appropriate path to follow. The committee then faced three fundamental questions: How should we determine *what themes* would be the most informative for the campus to examine, given that our objective is quality improvement? What ways might those themes be translated and *bundled into researchable*

perspectives were extensive, ranging from infrastructure challenges to financing, our imprints on the local community, adequate staff support, and even some inherent predicaments in the nature of growth per se.

An additional consideration that factored into the emerging themes were “areas of attention” noted by the WASC Commission in its **July 2000 reaccreditation letter** to the university. These included (1) refining the definition and improving evidence of learning, (2) continued strengthening of general education, (3) improving the Program Performance Review, (4) supporting faculty learning and development.

The Steering Committee added Dr. Gerald Patton, who joined Cal State Fullerton in May as the new Director of Assessment and Educational Effectiveness. The group was also required to conduct a **Preliminary Institutional Self-Review** under each of the four WASC standards. Those standards cover detailed topical areas under the headings of (1) defining institutional purposes and ensuring educational objectives; (2) achieving educational objectives through core functions; (3) developing and applying resources and organizational structures to ensure sustainability; and (4) creating an organization committed to learning and improvement. For each of the 41 criteria for evaluation under these area standards, the Committee discussed at considerable length “*how well*” Cal State Fullerton conducts the activity and *how important that area is “to address at this time.”* With our collective sentiment and the feedback from all of the spring semester activities, the Steering Committee then prepared the formal All-Campus Survey.

Convergence of Interests and Themes: The All-Campus Survey

As a final point of evidence collection, the Steering Committee prepared the formal and electronic All-Campus Survey. The survey questionnaire was organized into six major domains of interest:

- Addressing the Needs of Students
- Ensuring Student Learning
- Faculty Excellence and Effectiveness
- Staff Excellence and Effectiveness
- Campus Planning and Vision
- Campus and Community Partnerships

For each of 48 items distributed across these domains, respondents were asked to react to two dimensions: *How well is the campus doing in this area? How important is it to address this area now?* A total of 1,242 valid surveys were completed, representing a good cross-section of the university community. Of note, more than 430 individuals offered specific comments to the open-ended opportunity. The distribution of respondents is as follows:

Students	408	32.9% of total
Administration	94	7.6%
Staff	334	26.9%
Part-Time Faculty	124	10.0%
Full-Time Faculty	282	22.7%

Survey Findings

A wealth of evidence emerged from the survey responses and they indicate both strengths and challenges of our campus. As our accreditation process moves forward, it is important to keep in

4. *Given that being able to write effectively is a particularly significant learning goal on our campus, how can student and faculty expectations about writing be aligned so as to assist in achieving this goal?*
5. *How can quality review processes, such as the PPR, annual reports and discipline-based accreditation assist departments in assessing student learning and using the results to improve programs?*

Promoting Student Success and Engagement

6. *How can we better promote the success and engagement of our students by means of our mentoring and advising services and make the best use of our fiscal, physical, staffing, and information resources in order to achieve this objective?*

The next step in the reaccreditation process is to determine how we will answer these questions. What existing structures and processes might be used to address these questions? What additional structures, special resources, and other means of support may be needed to deal with these questions in order to move Cal State Fullerton to a higher level of institutional quality?

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WASC STEERING COMMITTEE

Sylvia Alva
Sheryl Fontaine
Diana Guerin
Paul Levesque
Kandy Mink Salas

Gerald Patton
Chris Renne
Tony Rimmer
Dolores Vura
Ray Young

Exhibit A

Reaccreditation Research Theme Process *Inclusionary and Systematic*

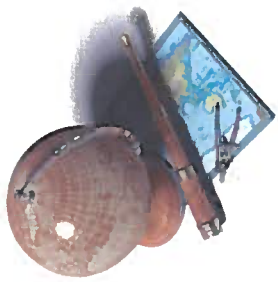
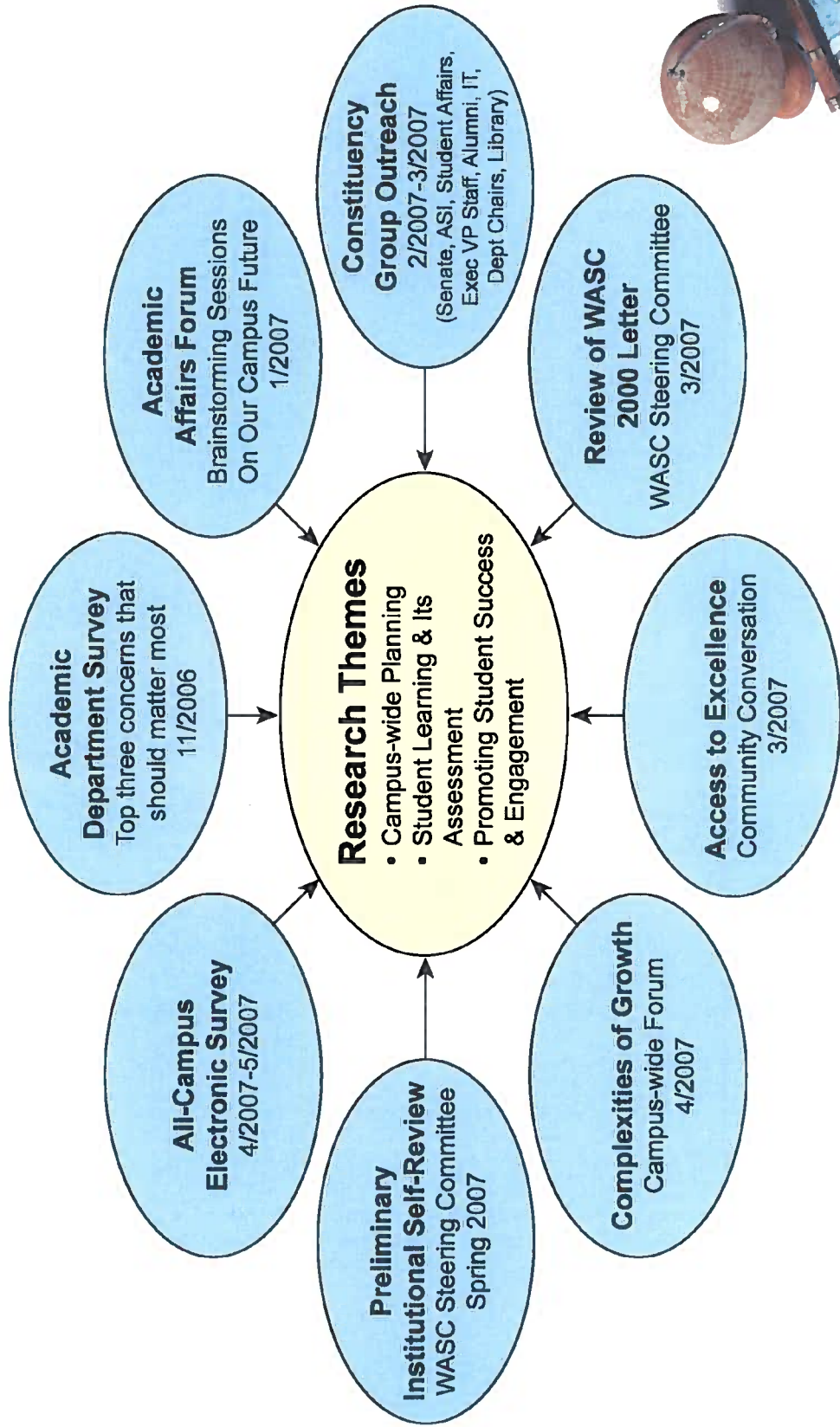


EXHIBIT B.
PERCEIVED CSUF INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHS
(Top Rated Indicators as Doing "Very Well" and Considered "Very Important")

Total Respondents = 1242

Rank	Area of Interest	Percent of Student Respondents	Percent of Admin Respondents	Percent of Staff Respondents	Percent of PT Faculty Respondents	Percent of Full-Time Faculty Respondents	Mean Rating of "Very Well"
1	Sufficient Technology Infrastructure	27.0%	43.0%	30.0%	24.0%	40.0%	32.8%
2	Welcoming Environment for Students	37.0%	20.0%	29.0%	28.0%	21.0%	27.0%
3	CSUF Assesses & Serves Needs of Our Region	29.0%	17.0%	30.0%	28.0%	21.0%	25.0%
4	Clear Educational Quality Message	27.0%	25.0%	34.0%	22.0%	14.0%	24.4%
5	Accessibility of General Campus Information	24.0%	20.0%	27.0%	25.0%	24.0%	24.0%
6	Faculty Promote Student Success	30.0%	9.0%	19.0%	27.0%	30.0%	23.0%
7	Campus Actively Supports Staff Professional Development	16.0%	26.0%	19.0%	29.0%	14.0%	20.8%
8	Degree Programs Have Clear Learning Outcomes	27.0%	6.0%	20.0%	28.0%	21.0%	20.4%
9	Irvine Branch Campus Serves the Community Well	23.0%	22.0%	23.0%	26.0%	8.0%	20.4%
10	CSUF Assesses & Serves Needs & Interests of Prospective Students	25.0%	13.0%	26.0%	21.0%	14.0%	19.8%

Source: "Charting Our Campus Future" The Campuswide Survey, April-May 2007.
 Revised data tabulations 06-06-07 extract. Extract by R. Young 08-07-07.

EXHIBIT C.
URGENT AGENDA ITEMS -- RANK ORDER OF RESPONDENTS
(At least 20% of Two Constituencies Marked "Very Important" and "Not Well" Done)

Line	Area of Interest	Students	Admin.	Staff	Part-Time Faculty	Full-Time Faculty	Composite Percent (Weighted)
1	Adequate Enrollment Planning	41%	41%	28%	35%	45%	37.8%
2	Campus Planning Balances Quality and Enrollment	35%	38%	23%	43%	50%	36.2%
3	Number of Staff is Sufficient	26%	44%	48%	21%	34%	34.6%
4	Number of Full-Time Faculty is Sufficient	26%	23%	30%	28%	49%	32.3%
5	Campus Planning Processes Are Integrated	28%	47%	27%	24%	39%	31.3%
6	Undergrad Programs Ensure Writing Skills Development	13%	26%	19%	42%	44%	25.5%

Source: "Charting Our Campus Future" The Campuswide Survey, April-May 2007.
Revised data tabulations 06-06-07 extract. Restructuring by R. Young 08-09-07

**EXHIBIT D.
STUDENTS' INTEREST IN ENGAGEMENT ITEMS**

Line	Area of Interest	Student Respondents		Composite Rating
		Rated as "Very Important" and either "Not Done Well"	Done "Somewhat Well"	
1	Quality Financial Aid Advising	23%	29%	52%
2	Faculty Use Assessments of Student Learning for Program Improvement	24%	22%	46%
3	Faculty Engage Students in their Scholarship & Creative Activities	22%	22%	44%
4	Students are Engaged with the Campus Beyond their Classes	24%	17%	41%
5	Campus Priorities and Goals are Communicated Clearly	23%	18%	41%
6	CSUF Facilities Support a Sense of Community on Campus	23%	18%	41%
7	Student Engagement with Faculty in Research	20%	19%	39%
8	Student Engagement in Out-of-Classroom Experiences	20%	18%	38%

Source: "Charting Our Campus Future" The Campuswide Survey, April-May 2007.
Revised data tabulations 06-06-07 extract. Restructuring by R. Young 08-09-07

EXHIBIT E. VOICES OF THE CAMPUS

Student Perspectives:

I couldn't imagine having better teachers or a better learning environment. I love coming to school each and every day. Keep up the good work CSUF!

I hope that these surveys will serve as a tool in the continual advancement of this fine campus, meeting the needs and expectations of all who embody CSUF.

We should remodel some of the older buildings, especially the restrooms . . .

Student advisement seems disconnected and uneven across the campus. A professional advisor who knows about general education, the major, and campus graduation requirements [who] can meet with students across their stay on campus would be an important step to facilitate graduation.

I also suggest [in advising] that there would be a mandatory counselor meeting at least once a year, just to make sure the student's on the right track. This would help the students in graduating faster, because whether they like it or not, they [would be] getting help.

Administrators' Perspective:

This campus has grown so significantly in terms of students and operational complexity, yet resources to successfully maintain a campus of our size are not forthcoming. In addition to having weaknesses in quality and sufficient number of staff, the physical appearance and maintenance of this campus is not in line with being the number one in the [CSU] system.

Staff Perspectives:

The staff is (and has been) stretched beyond their means, many doing the work of two or three [persons]. In addition, there has been little or basically no growth in benefits or acknowledgement for those who have worked so hard and diligently over the years.

The program I work with has almost tripled in terms of the number of students [served], and I am forced to share an office.

We get along well, but it makes it difficult to maintain any confidentiality.

CSUF is a great place to work. We have the best 'product' in the world – we deal in "futures." Any time I lose sight of that . . . I just walk across the campus between class times when the students are out and I remember why we are all here.

Faculty Perspectives:

I am dismayed quite frequently by the poor writing skills and lack of academic rigor of a surprisingly large number of students.

Growth – how many students do we want, how many must we take? We need much better integration of everything else – scheduling, physical structure, faculty workload and recruitment – around this basic decision

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EXHIBIT F. RESEARCH THEMES AND QUESTIONS WASC REACCREDITATION PROCESS

Campus-wide Planning

1. *In the face of system-wide, as well as local enrollment pressures, how does each campus unit define and assess indicators of quality and their contributions to the academic mission of the University?*
2. *How do we integrate and prioritize these indicators of quality with campus-wide planning?*

Student Learning and Its Assessment

3. *What are the student learning goals that we hold in common across baccalaureate degree programs? How are these learning goals articulated and achieved through curricular and co-curricular experiences?*
4. *Given that being able to write effectively is a particularly significant learning goal on our campus, how can student and faculty expectations about writing be aligned so as to assist in achieving this goal?*
5. *How can quality review processes, such as the PPR, annual reports and discipline-based accreditation assist departments in assessing student learning and using the results to improve programs?*

Promoting Student Success and Engagement

6. *How can we better promote the success and engagement of our students by means of our mentoring and advising services and make the best use of our fiscal, physical, staffing, and information resources in order to achieve this objective?*