

**REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM  
EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW**

**To California State University, Dominguez Hills**

February 13 - 15, 2008

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
Reaffirmation of Accreditation

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The evaluation team in conducting its review was able to evaluate the institution according to Commission Standards and Core Commitments and therefore submits this Report to the Accrediting Commission for Senior College and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for action and to the institution for consideration.

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**WASC Educational Effectiveness  
Team Report  
California State University—Dominguez Hills**

**SECTION I. Introduction**

**IA. - Description of Institution and Visit**

California State University – Dominguez Hills (CSU-DH or institution) is one of twenty-three universities in the CSU system. It is located in Carson, California, and serves the population of the greater Los Angeles basin. The institution was founded by a legislative act in the early 1960s as South Bay State College. The first classes began in 1965. The name was changed in 1966 to California State University – Dominguez Hills and the first class graduated in June of 1967.

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges first accredited the institution in 1964 when the school opened. The campus accreditation was renewed routinely until 1998 when there were concerns raised about its distance education programs. In 1999, the institution was placed on “warning”. In a subsequent site visit during 2002, the warning was removed and accreditation was reaffirmed. Since 2002, the institution has been approved for a series of new degrees through the Substantive Change process.

The Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) site visit was conducted in fall 2006 and the final report of the CPR Team was reviewed with the Commission in February 2007. The Commission accepted the Team Report, scheduled the Educational Effectiveness Review for February 2008 and requested that the institution incorporate its response to the issues raised in this action letter and the major recommendations of the CPR Team report in its Educational Effectiveness Report (EER).

A Team was convened to conduct the Educational Effectiveness visit on February 13-15, 2008. This report offers an evaluation by the EER Team of the response by the institution to the core commitment to Educational Effectiveness, response and progress around previous Commission concerns and recommendations following the 2006 CPR, and assessment of institutional progress in creating and sustaining systems of quality assurance and improvement of student learning.

**IB - Quality of the Educational Effectiveness Presentation and Alignment with the Proposal**

In its *Institutional Proposal*, CSU-DH designed a thematic framework focused upon Academic Quality, Campus Change, Diversity, and Civic Engagement. The Educational Effectiveness Report clearly followed the proposed plan in both



written materials available to the Team and during campus interviews with university constituents. These findings are consistent with the presentation of the CPR report from 2006 as evidenced by the CPR Team Report. The thematic framework appears to have served its purpose well as it has led to broad engagement of the entire campus community toward ensuring educational effectiveness of its academic programs.

In both its institutional report for the EER, and through evidence gathered by the Team during the visit, CSU-DH demonstrated a commitment to serious self-evaluation and improvement consistent with the design of the review as articulated in the *Proposal*. The institution used its preparation for the CPR and the EER as an opportunity for formal and serious inquiry into institutional issues, resulting in a number of improvements in areas of capacity and educational effectiveness.

The Team found the EER institutional presentation probing, balanced, and evidence-based. The report was consistent with the design of the *Proposal* and responsive to intended review outcomes noted in it. The Team considered the EER to be comprehensive in its response to issues raised during the CPR. The institutional presentation included numerous exhibits and data elements that supported each of four EER essays, or issues identified in the CPR, in addition to data required by WASC.

The EER report presented relevant evidence where data were analyzed with respect to key issues identified by the Commission and the institution in its *Proposal*. While suggestions and recommendations for further improvement are offered in the report of the EER Team, the University is to be commended for implementing some decisions since the time of the CPR based upon institutional review of key quality indicators that are aligned with the strategic plan and intended outcomes of the review.

The Team determined that both the CPR and EER presentations accurately represented the state of the institution at the time of each review, and demonstrated in those reports a capacity to align intended outcomes with critical and strategic issues identified by CSU-DH. Institutional involvement of faculty, staff, and administrators in preparation for the EER was inclusive and intentional in efforts to improve educational effectiveness. Throughout the accreditation process, CSU-DH demonstrated integrity, commitment, and resolved to engage each of the three stages of the review for institutional improvement across the core functions of the organization.

#### **IC - Preparatory Review Update**

In its February 2007 letter to the institution, the Commission identified several areas from the CPR visit that should be addressed during the EE visit. Issues regarding transitions in key leadership positions, enrollment management, data-

rich effectiveness analysis, and tracking access and success data were important areas for reflection and further evidence-based analysis.

The Team determined that the institution provided appropriate responses to each of the issues from the CPR visit. Evidence was presented in the institution's EE Report and Team members specifically reviewed documents and interviewed members of the campus community regarding these issues.

Specific findings from these reviews are noted below.

### **Leadership Transitions**

The Commission expected that institutional momentum would continue to be directed toward achieving the outcomes in its *Proposal* for the Educational Effectiveness Review in spite of the retirement of past president James Lyons. His leadership was lauded for its "consistent support of the WASC accreditation process" and the Commission hoped that his successor would continue such support.

From the EE Report and during the site visit, the Team noted that the institution has suffered additional losses in its administrative leadership over the last few years. In addition to the President, the positions of Provost, and the Vice President for University Advancement were also vacant. Also noted was that the positions of Assistant Vice President for Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning (IRAP), and the Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities have only recently been filled.

In August 2007, after a national search, Dr. Mildred Garcia was appointed president of the institution. President Garcia has appointed well-respected senior administrators to serve as Interim Provost and Interim Vice President for University Advancement while searches are completed for those positions. The reformulated administrative leadership team will need to be poised to deal with both the challenges and opportunities facing the institution as outlined in this report.

From the visit it is clear that President Garcia is committed to the WASC accreditation process and has unequivocally supported the institution's efforts to complete the Educational Effectiveness Review. The institution is to be commended for its ability to continue to "sustain its momentum" despite these significant leadership changes over the past few years. The loss of any single major administrator is often a traumatic experience at many institutions. Therefore, the ability of this institution to withstand the loss of so many key administrators almost simultaneously and yet maintain institutional momentum towards re-accreditation is particularly commendable and is evidence of sustainable structures and processes for educational effectiveness (CFR 1.3, 3.10).



## **Data-supported Enrollment Management**

The institution has focused much attention on enrollment through a review of its policies, procedures, and programs in an attempt to identify reasons for the lack of growth (CFR 3.5). Data are routinely gathered and analyzed to determine the impact of interventions to improve enrollment and retention. It was noted that many colleges in the institution's service area indicate similar struggles with declining enrollment, along with some of the CSU campuses in the Los Angeles area. In addition, enrollments in the Los Angeles Unified School District are also declining. These students form the majority of the institution's first-time matriculated freshmen.

In response to the previously noted concern from the CPR visit, the institution has formulated and strengthened its Retention Policy Council. This council is broadly representative from across the university community, and includes professionals who are able and ready to respond to trends and concerns. Much evidence was supplied in the EE Report and on site that indicates intentional effort being expended to recruit and retain quality students. This process involves the Academic Senate as they realize that enrollment influences academic decisions. There appears to be an intentionality of purpose as all aspects of student success are involved.

In addition to retention, the institution also relies heavily upon the Enrollment Management Policy Council that works diligently in developing and sustaining a "steady supply of qualified students required to maintain institutional vitality." Institutional marketing efforts have expanded, partly through the assistance of an external firm. New recruiting programs have been launched and new academic programs have been prepared to attract quality students to the campus. Again, these plans and activities have involved the entire campus (CFR 4.8).

Some disappointments have been realized. The Team noted that students have many impediments to success, including life issues that are not easily overcome. In some cases there are insufficient resources, leaving students without the ability to afford an education. In others, students have not met the academic goals of the university and are asked to leave. An additional challenge was noted regarding marketing in the area with other CSU campuses nearby.

Clearly, the institution is making every effort to ensure that adequate numbers of students apply and are admitted. The institution utilizes every resource available including valuable data and analyses to support its planning and implementation. In spite of all of the efforts, the institution continues to struggle with enrollment, retention and the concurrent financial strain.

## **SECTION II. Evaluation of Educational Effectiveness**

### **IIA - Evaluation of the Institution's Educational Effectiveness Inquiry**

The institution identified four themes that were addressed throughout the Educational Effectiveness report. These themes are consistent with the *Institutional Proposal* that was submitted and accepted as part of the re-accreditation process. CSU-DH determined these themes to be "core issues" that guided the educational effectiveness inquiry and "captured campus interest and helped sustain the engagement of the campus learning community in the self-study process." (CFR 4.5) Thus, the Team was able to closely link institutional goals with specific outcomes identified by the institution. The model served the institution well as the Team reviewed evidence and interviewed many people in the campus community who were informed, engaged and committed to the four core issues.

Essay 1 was entitled "Academic Quality: Improving and Enhancing Student Outcomes" and addressed many of the core issues related to educational effectiveness: *Enhancing Critical Skills, Assessment of Academic Quality, Academic Support: Programs and Services, Student Success Toward Degree Completion, Faculty Development and the Impact on Student Success*, and *Impact of Undergraduate Research on Student Outcomes*. Each area was thoroughly vetted and supported with data and analyses that identified progress and attainment of educational effectiveness. In addition, Team members interviewed a wide variety of individuals and groups to ensure that WASC standards were being evaluated and addressed.

Since many of the key issues noted above focused upon teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes, those issues will be specifically addressed in the next section of this document. However, faculty development, strategic planning, and campus environment will be highlighted below.

#### **Faculty Development**

The Team noted the excellent effort in providing student learning outcomes assessment consultation to faculty by the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (SLOA) coordinator and Faculty Associate. (CFR 2.4) The expectation that all faculty should be engaged in assessment is clearly articulated on the Center's website. Expectations for student learning outcomes are expected in the syllabus template and have been approved by the Academic Senate. In addition, the SLOA report (2007) indicates that the Provost and Vice Provost, along with the CTL Interim Director have been providing "support and commitment to SLOA by providing to the extent possible the resources to accomplish current and future goals."



In the aforementioned report, it is noted that "The challenge is to sustain campus progress in providing data-based evidence of learning; that is, students achieving learner-centered, measurable program-level outcomes as shown by program faculty using appropriate program-level assessment methods to collect and analyze data, draw conclusions, take action and evaluate effectiveness of action taken."

The SLOA committee has established a faculty committee whose charge has been approved by the Academic Senate. Early results indicate that these "checkpoints" for faculty oversight and intervention are effective in engaging most of the faculty in measuring student-learning outcomes. Future reviews should be able to verify the long-term effectiveness of this strategy.

The Provost indicated that faculty support for student learning outcomes varies; some having fully invested in the process and others not as much. This was further supported by the SLOA documents kept in the CTL, particularly for general education assessment. With respect to general education, some departments have not responded to requests for follow-up reports since 2003. The Team encourages the institution to investigate ways in which they can encourage full participation from all faculty in the SLOA process. At this point, the general education committee reports that they plan to suspend those courses for which evaluation documents have not been submitted. Suspension means that these courses will not be offered for GE credit but can be offered for credit within the majors. This sanction has been noted with varied effectiveness in the past. However, it sends a powerful message to the departments that house GE courses to make student-learning outcomes a priority.

As noted earlier in this report, some faculty and programs have made the recommended improvements while others have not. SLOA coordinators have requested support from the deans to ensure that recommendations to faculty about course improvements be met but, at the time of this review, the recommendations had not been acted upon. Consistency in reviewing learning assessments is a challenge that CSU-DH is addressing. The Team recommends internal follow-up to improve consistency between faculty action and institutional expectations.

The Academic Senate has been fully involved in the approval of all SLOA process documents, program reviews, and general education outcomes assessment documents. The institution is to be applauded for having such collaboration between the faculty and the administration. In fact, the spirit of engagement between the faculty and the administration is strong, indicating positive collaborative relationships that measure and ensure student success.

The institution has invested a great deal of effort to improve writing and faculty buy-in seems widespread. While the CSU system has proposed the use of the Collegiate Learning Assessment program (CLA), faculty involved in the SLOA



process and the general education committee expresses the concern that CLA results will not lead to meaningful data for how they can improve student learning. Efforts should be made to determine the most effective ways to assist faculty in measuring student writing at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The Center for Teaching and Learning has an impressive *Comprehensive Faculty Development Plan*. (CFR 3.4) In this document, it is evident that faculty are encouraged to develop as innovative instructors. While not provided release time to do so, faculty is offered developmental programs that they value (See minutes of Academic Senate Meeting). However, the extent to which these initiatives are valued by the whole of the institution is still unclear. CTL has some data (See spring 2006 Survey) on the improvements that have been made through their faculty development initiatives, but gathering additional data may prove beneficial to their intent to demonstrate the value of time invested in professional development for teaching.

The Faculty Resources Project Survey (2006) reported low faculty satisfaction in some key areas such as research/scholarship opportunities, shared governance, and faculty roles within the institution. (CFR 2.9) The institution is to be applauded for gathering this type of information which may prove helpful in identifying reasons that faculty are not able to attend to the improvement of student learning. The institution is encouraged to investigate these faculty concerns further to identify where they may be able to improve recognition for appropriate linkages of scholarship, teaching, and research.

A meeting with five Academic Senate members reported continued concern for heavy faculty workloads but, for the most part, members were optimistic about being able to figure out solutions in partnership with the administration. Academic Senators were complimentary of their ability to work with administration and were appreciative of the President's willingness to have candid conversations with them at Academic Senate Executive meetings as well as at regular Academic Senate meetings.

It is evident from the meetings with faculty and staff, that faculty and staff are motivated by the desire to show constituents that they have many "*points of pride*" and that they also have data to demonstrate their excellence. In order to counterbalance CSU system budgeting restrictions, the institution has encouraged entrepreneurial thinking. As a result, enrollment has increased in at least one program.

Essay 2 addressed campus change, in particular, "building sustainable structures and processes for educational effectiveness." A number of key issues, including enrollment and diversity, are covered in other sections of this report but two items, strategic planning and campus environment, are of particular importance for supporting educational effectiveness and are addressed below.



## **Strategic Planning**

The institution has established a Strategic Plan Oversight Committee (SPOC) that is charged with annually assessing the institutional strategic plan ("*Toward 2010*"). At the time of the visit, two annual reviews of the plan were completed (January 2005 and 2006). (CFR 4.1, 4.2) Each of the 65 institutional action tasks was assessed and specific recommendations for improvement were made to the University Planning Council. The recommendations focused attention upon fiscal constraints and plans to effectively deal with issues that affected finances (enrollment, retention, new programs). Solid data collection and analysis supported each action task to ensure appropriate decision-making. (CFR 4.3) Additional plans have been developed from the framework of the institutional plan. These include plans for enrollment, academics, and facilities.

Although the SPOC was suspended for a brief time, President Garcia reinstated the process to enrich the planning process and renew institutional commitment to future plans. Evidence gathered by the Team indicated strong support from a wide range of institutional constituents. Interviews held regarding the planning process with various faculty and staff groups noted that fiscal and academic issues are widely discussed and decisions are made collaboratively. An intricate network of committees and councils are actively involved with institutional governance and decision-making. Systems and structures are firmly in place to direct, monitor, and appraise institutional planning. In addition, the Academic Deans work collaboratively to determine appropriate strategies for advancing creative solutions to strategic challenges. In this vein, recent leadership changes have not dramatically affected the operations of the institution. The key focus remains on the students and faculty.

## **Campus Environment**

Many significant changes have occurred within the physical environment at the institution since the CPR visit. The Loker Student Union reopened in spring 2007 and revitalized student life through its many eating areas, space for socializing, meeting and academic engagement. The Team had several opportunities to visit the Union during various times of the day and evening, and observed a very active environment that appeared to add vitality and community to the institution. In addition, a campus-wide poster session was hosted during the visit in the new ballroom. Clearly, this facility is functioning well to add significant value to campus life and students were strongly supportive.

The institution has also improved numerous classrooms with technology-enhanced media. These improvements allow faculty and students to enhance presentations and learning environments. Plans are underway to expand media-enhanced classrooms in the coming years. Child-care services for students have also been improved with the re-opening of the Child Development Center in fall 2007. (CFR 3.5) A number of students indicated the supportive value of the



Center as they need assistance with their children while they are attending classes. The Team highly commends the institution for its particular attention to this issue, especially in light of the community it serves.

Construction is also underway for a much needed expansion of the University Library. This expansion will add 140,000 square feet to the existing library. The addition will be energy efficient and will provide support for an expanded student body. Improvements will also be gained in computer-learning laboratories, archival storage and book storage capacity. (CFR 3.6)

The Team was apprised of the continued cooperation with the Home Depot Center located on the campus. Although much has been gained through this venture, students indicated their frustration with parking when events are being held. Although this appears to be a minor issue, it remains a problem for students on this mostly commuter campus. The administration is encouraged to continue to work with the Home Depot Center to alleviate these challenges.

### **IIB - Evaluation of the Institution's Systems for Enhancing Teaching Effectiveness and Learning Results**

The institution has made conscientious and varied efforts to develop learning outcomes for educational programs. There are numerous structures and systems that provide evidence of student learning outcomes assessment, from individual classes to degree programs. As evidenced in poster presentations, the university reception, and individual meetings with the program review panel, the campus community has identified the value of assessment and it is evident that the campus community shares the responsibility of establishing, reviewing, fostering, and demonstrating the attainment of these expectations at the program level. (CFR 4.4, 4.5, 4.7, 4.8)

#### **Student Learning Outcomes Assessment**

The institution has worked diligently in developing, and measuring student learning outcomes. This has been in large part due to the very active University Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (USLOAC), which is a faculty driven committee. It appears to be very well organized. The faculty decided on institutional learning outcomes, and developed this committee to oversee the progress of each program's achievement of institutional outcomes as well as program outcomes. The data are collected annually—the goal is to achieve consistent, clear, concise data on student learning. Although the committee materials are very well organized, the extent and quality of the assessment depends on the individual program. Thus, variations of program assessment are presented during each review cycle. (CFR 2.7)

Each program submits its report to the University Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee. The Committee reviews the results and submits a report back to the program noting attainment of outcomes, or areas of needed

improvement. Changes have been made in programs from the feedback received from the USLOAC. For example, one graduate program, after using surveys created by the Graduate Studies program, developed new student learning outcomes, and developed a grading rubric for increased consistency and fairness. The USLOAC also provides rubrics and cues for programs beginning the process of outcomes assessment that can be used in creating the reports.

After speaking with the chair and chair elect of the USLOAC, and reviewing the documents of three programs, the team commends the institution for providing such an excellent example of documenting achievement of program outcomes on an annual basis.

The criteria checklists and the memorandum that USLOAC writes to the program faculty are filled with helpful ideas of how to improve their assessment processes. In addition, USLOAC provides faculty and staff with guidelines to complete assessment plans and reports following good practice criteria. Since the process is so well supported with guidelines and one-on-one consultation, it may benefit the USLOAC to make the process transparent by posting this process and guidelines on the website so that others throughout the institution can learn and expand their assessment efforts.

Upon reviewing the SLOAC documents, it was also clear that programs have utilized the evidence to promote improvements. What is not clear is the extent that these documents are being used by the University Planning Council to inform their decisions for strategic planning and budgeting re-allocations.

### **Program Review and General Education Assessment**

The institution has developed an impressive structure to assist in program assessment. The Program Effectiveness Assessment Tool (PEAT) is the foundation for the program review process and is an integral aspect of the six-year cycle. Careful attention has been given to providing definitions, expectations and criteria for programs to follow when conducting reviews of their academic programs. This structure assists the programs but also aids the institution in gathering data for analysis in institutional planning, resource allocation and conformity with requirements from the CSU Chancellor's Office.

Team members were able to review the files of many of the programs that have been processed through PEAT. The evidence was validated through interviews with academic department chairs and the Program Review Panel. Clearly, the faculty and academic leadership are actively engaged in assessing program outcomes. The department chairs noted how the process now includes an external reviewer who adds an objective dimension to program assessment. In several cases, programs have used the review to identify areas of weakness that lead to recommendations for improvement. Some examples include:



- Re-writing outcomes for capstone courses
- Redeveloping writing assignments
- Adding community assessment to the process
- Revamping the undergraduate curriculum
- Requesting additional faculty

Evidence reviewed by the Team indicated that some programs are at the initial stages of assessment while others (notably, professional programs) are highly developed. This discrepancy is often directly linked to professional external program accreditations that require professional programs to provide specific information regarding student learning and graduate attainment.

Some challenges were noted by those who are directly involved with program reviews. It was clearly noted that there is a lot of campus-wide activity related to program assessment. However, although much data are collected and analyzed, at times it appears that the variation between department assessment methods can lead to fragmented outcomes that are difficult to utilize for strategic decision-making. In some instances the Strategic Planning system cannot readily support program needs related to assessment outcomes. Thus, departments are forced to “take things into our own hands” by applying for grants, partnerships and other forms of internal and external collaborations. Although the faculty and academic chairs may see this as indifference, it has actually led to some creative relationships that ultimately assist the program, faculty and students.

As reported by the Program Review Panel, students are invited to participate in the review process. However due to their demanding schedules, students are often not able to participate to the extent that the panel members would prefer. This is especially challenging for the CSU-DH students who in many ways are not like the typical college student. The institution is encouraged to find specific ways in which students can participate in the program review process that is more conducive to their students’ schedules. (CFR 2.5)

The evidence of general education assessment was examined in the Center for Teaching and Learning. The faculty-driven General Education Committee is to be applauded for its thoughtful plan for general education assessment (General education Program Review Process; adopted March, 2003). It is understandable that they are still in the process of evaluating their general education program as their assessment plan is extensive and thorough. In addition, the general education committee intends to conduct a meta-assessment following the review of all areas of their general education to determine whether improvements can be made to offerings and whether their offerings are applicable to learning needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Team encourages the institution to make their findings public and continue to invite feedback on their findings from all of their constituents including students and employers. (CFR 2.4)

Early documentation of the general education assessment process (see 2003-2004 Report) demonstrates the thoughtful feedback that has been provided to



program faculty from the general education committee about how courses can be improved. Specific examples of improvements in Eng 110 and 111 are well documented. In addition, memoranda generated to the General Education Committee Members in 2004 and 2005 offer further ideas for improvement. The process appears to be in place and effort is being expended. Results of this review will be very important in enhancing the general education program of the institution to meet the needs of their students and the academic programs.

### **Assessing Writing Competency**

Demonstrating competency in written communication is one of the major institutional goals, and the institution has taken several steps to solidifying this goal. The faculty developed the Writing Intensive initiative—an institutional plan that requires all programs to have students exposed to two writing intensive (WI) courses before graduation. To qualify, the courses have to be approved by the university committee before the course can be used as a WI course. Once a course is designated “WI eligible,” the faculty is given rubrics and guidance on how to make assignments incremental so as not to be burdensome on faculty or students, while at the same time continually improve writing competency. Of note, to be eligible to be counted as a WI course, it has to meet certain criteria—one of which is to require student revision and resubmission after feedback from the instructor. It was evident that the problem of writing competency was systematically studied, and the planned interventions were well thought out. Early evidence indicates that the plan is working, as student writing scores appear to be improving following successful completion of WI courses. Additional data needs to be assessed over extended periods of time to ensure the writing competency outcomes are generalizable across the institution.

### **Non-Academic Assessments**

The institution has done excellent work in identifying the variances in critical skills of their incoming freshmen. (CFR 2.10, 2.11) This information has been used to craft several academic and student support programs, some of which have been evaluated to be very successful (EER, p. 8-9). The institution is now encouraged to move from methods of indirect evaluation of these programs’ success to direct evaluation methods in order to pinpoint why retention may be continuing to increase in some programs.

It may benefit the institution to consider how academic advising and other academic and student support initiatives are contributing to program quality improvements as well as enrollment goals. While these conversations are occurring, it may benefit the institution to document the extent that divisions are sharing information across divisions to holistically improve programs. Such documentation may also help UPC with the refinement of the university’s new strategic plan.



Many of the student affairs programs have not focused the delivery of their programs on distance education students. (CFR 2.13) Apart from disability services, and academic support services offered by the library and CLASS, distance education students are paying full fees but not participating in a majority of the programs that those fees fund. Nursing students are the only distance education students who are paying reduced fees. The institution is encouraged to address this discrepancy.

## **IIC - Other Issues Arising from the Standards and CFRs**

The Team also paid additional attention to Core Issues 3 and 4 as identified in the EE Report: Diversity and Civic Engagement. These themes were used to "capture campus interest and help sustain the engagement of the campus learning community in the self-study process." (CFR 4.5) In addition, distance and online education programs were reviewed.

### **Diversity: Facilitating Meaningful Interactions**

The institution defines the significance of diversity in one statement: *"We recognize that diversity is not just a reflection of how we look, but rather a matter of how we think."* In exploring and celebrating its diversity, the institution looks beyond programs and activities to human perspectives that become guides for the future of its students. (CFR 1.5)

The institution promotes an extraordinary range of courses, programs and other activities that reflect its commitment to diversity. Initially developed through the efforts of the WASC Sub-Committee on Diversity, evidence is shown through the website, minutes of meetings, town halls, and poster sessions. (CFR 1.3)

The institution uses national surveys and other assessment strategies to document the impact of its efforts on the campus community. These assessments include the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) and the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ). Other assessment strategies (including alumni surveys) were employed to get a comprehensive understanding of the consequences of diversity programs. (CFR 2.10; 4.5) The data collected show positive outcomes of greater understanding of the institutional commitment to diversity.

Perspectives on diversity were pursued in meetings with students in UNV 101 as well as members of the WASC Diversity Sub-committee and campus-community poster session participants. Some faculty felt that the meaning of diversity was unclear. There were often two threads of thought. Some believed that the institution "proves the meaning of diversity" by its very multicultural, multi-ethnic existence while others maintained that the institution still "has a story to tell." Others simply described diversity as "giving people a chance."

As the same question was posed to students in UNV 101, they expressed a more pragmatic view of diversity such as a "mixture of people, religion and backgrounds" and "not feeling awkward". It was not seen as an issue because everyone came with the same goal: to obtain an education. This goal seemed to outweigh the obvious presence of differences. The institution provides the first year students in UNV101 with a feeling of family, a comfort level and an education. In the minds of students the deeper value sentiments of diversity is "how we think rather than a reflection of how we look."

The funding of WASC Mini-Grants provided faculty with the opportunity to investigate areas and issues that influence the learning experience on campus and responses to the impact of diversity on student learning. The Campus Community Poster Session included topics as varied as "Adaptation of Parents to Adult Children with Disabilities: A Grounded Theory," to "Project PHISSET: Preparing High Incidence Special Education Teachers for Urban Classrooms" and "Building Engagement and Attainment for Minority Students (BEAMS): a Five Year University Engagement Program at CSU Dominguez Hills." (CFR 2.8; 2.11; 3.4; 4.3; 4.7)

BEAMS is in the fourth year of a five year initiative funded through the Lumina Foundation to improve retention and institutional effectiveness at Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs). At CSU-DH, BEAMS is used to enhance critical skills of first year students. Through evidence from NSSE and other sources, institutions commit to analyzing the scope and character of students' engagement in implementing well-designed action plans to improve engagement, learning, persistence, and success. (CFR 2.5; 4.3)

Applying the results of BEAMS as well as an example of "closing the loop" on diversity, the Academic Senate has considered initiating students' declaration of a major at 30 units. This would assist students with an earlier academic affiliation in their disciplines and with their departments. This initiative is an effort to increase student engagement and success. With approval in the spring, a fair entitled "A Major Affair," is planned for students to meet faculty advisors and to declare a major. (CFR 2.2; 2.5; 2.10; 4.1; 4.4; 4.6; 4.7)

The broad and creative approach to diversity described as "interactional diversity" is a concept worthy of greater exploration and dissemination in the academy. The institution demonstrates its uniqueness as well as creativity of its diversity efforts in ways unexplored by other institutions. (CFR 2.9)

For instance, diversity is shown at the administrative level in the office of Disabled Student Services (DSS) and Veterans' Affairs. Federally mandated to provide assistance to students with disabilities, DSS provides special opportunities to students through distance education as well as campus services. Students with disabilities can pursue education on-line and, in one noteworthy case, the office provided a reader and reading support for a blind student living



out-of-state. The institution has also provided on-line test taking accommodations for other disabled students. (CFR 2.13; 3.6)

Meetings with local business owners and employers as well as alumni revealed even more about the positive outcomes of "interactional diversity." (CFR 4.8) These respondents indicated that in the world of work, CSU-DH students were much more skilled and positive in working with clients from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. According to those interviewed, CSU-DH graduates were competent, congenial, and reliable employees. For these reasons employers expressed an interest in CSU-DH graduates over those from other colleges and universities. (CFR 1.1; 2.4)

On the other hand, the institution has not achieved the same level of success with the diversity of its faculty. The overall campus climate is welcoming and the geographic location of the institution should be attractive to faculty of color.

### **Civic Engagement**

Civic engagement has been an important goal and ideal reflected in the institution's mission statement and Strategic Plan as Goal #4. The institution was founded during the period of civil unrest of the 60's and was born out of a need to serve the needs of an under-served community. According to the Executive Summary "*civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.*" Forms of civic engagement include community service, volunteering, community service - learning and other experiential education methods, and political engagement. Civic engagement is an important part of the history of the institution and is an essential core goal. This goal challenges the institution to deepen students' understanding and commitment to the realization of a multicultural society through their participation in community and civic affairs. (CFR 1.1,1.2.)

The concept of civic engagement under the new administration includes engaging the community through a number of promotional and outreach efforts. President Garcia's vision of civic engagement is broad and includes an aggressive plan to market and promote the institution to civic leaders and to the business and industrial communities that surround the institution.

### **Assessing Civic Engagement**

The institution has made concerted efforts to appraise the effectiveness of civic engagement for its students and graduates. Through numerous surveys, meetings, research studies and events with local constituents, the institution has attempted to define, assess, and analyze its accomplishments in civic engagement. The assessment begins with well-established outcomes and a plan

for assessing those outcomes. Reviews included all aspects of academic and community life including academic programs, field experience courses, distance learning courses, outreach efforts, and business partnerships. Alumni and key campus personnel were involved in spearheading the assessment. Finally, the institution continues to inform the campus of assessment findings through a variety of methods including town hall meetings and poster sessions. (CFR 4.5, 4.6, 4.8)

With all of this effort it remains a mystery why a number of people across campus continue to be confused in the lack of the definition and conceptualization of civic engagement. Broad communication will be a continuous challenge for institutional leaders to manage as they focus future attention upon this core issue.

### **Distance and Online Education Assessment**

The institution has been an early adopter of distance and online education. Program directors indicated they have in fact used the online education format in response to the ebb and flow of enrollment—this has helped the institution to be responsive to the changing needs and demographics of the students. For example, many academic programs were online, then the consumers sought more face-to-face courses, now the shift is returning to a demand for online courses. This flexibility allows the institution to meet the needs and demands of the programs, while increasing accessibility of the local, as well as, the global population.

Curriculum and Instruction: After reviewing the online courses, it is clear that visual presentation, organization, or completeness need design attention. Entry points (index pages) for the courses were frequently plain and uninviting. The materials (i.e., syllabus, course content) are often presented in a long, linear document format that required much scrolling. There is a lot of plain text, and students are not asked to stop, and actively engage in mini “tests of knowledge” prior to continuing on with the lesson. In several courses there are few assignments detailed. In another, all assignments are in one long document. Other than text based information, of the five courses the Team was given access to review, only one course had anything other than text. Two of five online courses had articles loaded up for the student to access and read. (CFR 2.8)

Faculty Support: Faculty reported the use of classroom technology to include the uploading of videotapes segmented into 15-20 minutes each, online readings and articles, films, webcasts, as well as using supporting software such as TurnItIn, and Camtasia, Frontpage and/or OpenSource. Resources from individual schools/departments vary depending on funding sources. When queried about assistance with the instructional design aspects of online courses, faculty reported that there is one instructional design person to help build and



design courses. This person is also responsible for managing the institution-wide Blackboard course delivery system. A few schools within the institution reported having instructional design personnel but this is not standardized across the institution.

When queried about educational support of technology for teaching, the Team discovered that there are several opportunities on campus for faculty education in using technology to teach. Faculty report that the institution takes a "hands on approach" to faculty development. Institutional opportunities include monthly brown bag luncheons, informal dialoging, and a "Help Desk" where students or faculty can seek assistance with technological problems. Departmental opportunities also exist, where certain departments within the institution have procured funding and provide training and support to their specific staff regarding technology and online instruction. Other departments (i.e., Nursing) also provide training sessions within their school settings. There appears to be formal as well as informal education of the faculty regarding use of online courses, as well as "emotional support". Some schools include technology instruction in their new faculty orientation, and one school has the policy of delivering a course at least three times with face to face interaction prior to developing online, to insure the content is stable before working with design of the technology.

Student Support: The institution has a strong web presence, and uses it effectively to offer distance education programs. A 24-hour helpline is available for students experiencing technological problems. The institution also has a link for student centered library services for distance, online and extended education students. These materials are intended to provide every opportunity for the student to succeed while doing distance education. In addition, the institution has clearly demonstrated a student-friendly attitude for those students seeking information. This is evident with online information such as monthly online or teleconference "information sessions" for interested/potential students, as well as providing career roadmaps. For current students, the institution provides web space for online information about textbook exchange, and offers a "computer check" site to practice using the software/technology encountered in online courses among others. Evidence for success includes confidential emails from students who report high satisfaction with online course format and delivery.

Evaluation and Assessment: The institution has a long history with distance and online education, yet acknowledges disturbing attrition rates. When asked about this situation, faculty stated they see online mode as a marketing tool to attract students, as many come because of the flexibility and autonomy offered by online degrees. The program directors see online education as an enhancement—a drawing card. Tracking progression is not without difficulty, as they acknowledge the nascent development of tools for tracking online students. For instance, many students enroll, and slowly progress, or plan on taking a core set of classes with no plans for graduation, and some students enroll in a school, and then transfer to general studies. These three factors may affect the retention rate of enrolled students. The program directors acknowledge a need to develop

better ways of tracking retention. The distance educators indicated that the most successful programs are ones that are hybridized—some face-to-face interaction occurring along with the online portions of the course and program. They report this format has been successful with domestic as well as international programs offered through the institution.

### **SECTION III - Integrative Chapter**

#### **IIIA - Summary of Team Conclusions**

The institution is an important and significant university in the CSU system. It draws from an extremely diverse population and serves the needs of a supportive and appreciative community. It is clearly focused upon student success and has taken this re-accreditation process seriously while engaging its entire community. Institutional leaders are strongly supportive of assessing student learning outcomes and have provided structures and systems to ensure that they are delivering quality education to their students. Although much work remains, the institution is to be commended in the following areas of educational effectiveness:

1. The institution continued its momentum and completed its preparation for the Educational Effectiveness Review during significant academic leadership changes.
2. The entire campus is focused on student success. Evidence supports this goal in every area across the institution from the faculty to student services, from the President's Office to the library. Everyone makes concerted effort to assist students in their quest for educational success. (2.10, 2.12, 2.13)
3. Strong academic leadership is exhibited from the institution-wide administrators, the College Deans, Department Chairs, and faculty. They are unified in purpose, collaborate collegially and act creatively to ensure academic success from remedial levels through graduate studies. (CFR 3.10, 3.11)
4. Structures and systems are firmly in place and broadly integrated into the campus climate to support and appraise educational effectiveness. The academic leadership, and most faculty, are committed to the process and utilize student learning outcomes to improve and enhance education. (CFR 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7)
5. The diversity of the institution is an integral part of its mission and is greatly appreciated by the external community of employers and alumni. (CFR1.1)



6. There is considerable and growing evidence of commitment to the institution from alumni, civic leaders, and the larger community. (CFR 4.4.8)

### **IIIB - Major Recommendations**

The goal of accreditation is improvement and enhancement of learning. Toward that end, the Team recommends further institutional attention to improve and add benefit to the University and the students they serve. Specifically, the Team recommends that the institution consider the following in realizing its own stated goals for improvement:

1. Encourage the President in her search for additional university leaders. These key leadership positions will further enhance and stabilize an already dynamic academic leadership team. (CFR 1.3, 3.10)
2. Continue to develop and assess creative programs and pedagogies to stabilize and advance student enrollment. (CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)
3. Continue to broadly expand the use of direct evidence of student learning outcomes at both the course and program levels. (CFR 4.4)
4. Include online education more fully in future enrollment and student affairs planning efforts, ensuring that adequate fiscal and human resources are allocated to support this valuable enterprise. (CFR 3.1) There is also a need to address the discrepancy in the fees paid by some distance education students.
5. Continue and strengthen efforts to recruit and retain more faculty of color.

