

**REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM
CAPACITY AND PREPARATORY REVIEW TEAM REPORT
TO CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN MARCOS**

MARCH 7-9, 2007

**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 the Core Commitment for Institutional Capacity and therefore submits this Report to the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for action and to the institution for consideration.

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SECTION I – OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

IA – Description of Institution and Visit

Cal State San Marcos was founded in 1989 as the 20th campus of the public California State University. CSU San Marcos began as a branch of San Diego State University and evolved into an independent campus to meet expanding regional enrollment needs. The campus has grown from 280 full-time equivalent students (FTEs) in 1990 to become a medium-size campus with an enrollment of approximately 6,800 FTEs and 8,700 headcount in the Fall 2006. A large proportion of its students are adult students and/or first-generation college students. CSU San Marcos is largely a commuter school but committed to expanding its residential population. The University's current Strategic Plan includes five strategic priorities: 1. academic excellence; 2. student life; 3. campus climate; 4. community partnerships, and 5. educational equity. The University in its Institutional Self-Study Proposal of May 2005 observes that it "is now at a critical juncture in its history, needing to move from its core set of liberal arts and sciences, business, and education programs to become a comprehensive regional university."

CSU San Marcos was granted initial accreditation by the WASC Commission in June 1993. Following a WASC site visit in March 2000, the WASC Commission reaffirmed the accreditation of CSU San Marcos in June 2000 and scheduled the Preparatory Review for its next Self-Study for Re-accreditation in the Spring 2007. In February 2005 the WASC Commission approved the Substantive Change Proposal for a Doctorate in Educational Leadership (EdD) to be offered jointly by the University of California, San Diego, San Diego State University, and California State University, San Marcos.

IB – Quality of the Capacity and Preparatory Report and Alignment with the Proposal

Cal State San Marcos has taken a standards-based approach to the Capacity and Preparatory Review, organizing its report around the four WASC Standards and Criteria for Review. Particular attention is paid in the Capacity & Preparatory Review Report to those aspects of institutional capacity that are especially relevant to the three themes of planning, assessment, and first-year programs around which the University's Educational Effectiveness Review will be organized. The design of the University's Capacity and Preparatory Review presentation is consistent with the model of review advanced in its Institutional Self-Study Proposal approved by WASC and demonstrates rigorous inquiry with sound questions, appropriate methodology, and effective use of evidence.

Cal State San Marcos is in a period of transition and growth reflected in its Capacity and Preparatory Review Report. The institutional self-study has provided an opportunity to reflect, explore, and question, and has helped the campus to understand the challenges of moving forward while at the same time maintaining the values of its past. The initial efforts of the self-study itself were affected and delayed by transitions and changes in self-study committees and key institutional personnel. Following the appointment of a new Associate Vice President for Strategic Planning and Assessment in January 2006, considerable progress was made in organizing a self-study process that demonstrates comprehensive campus participation and engagement and institutional commitment to the creation of a learning organization based on an emerging "culture of evidence." The University has organized and provided comprehensive data and evidence in support of the claims made regarding institutional capacity in its Capacity &

Preparatory Review Report, documented in the Required Data Elements provided in Appendix A and the impressive map of self-review evidence provided in Appendix K of the Report.

IC – Response to Previous Commission Issues

CSU San Marcos in its Capacity & Preparatory Review Report presents a thorough response to issues highlighted by the WASC Commission in its previous action letter of July 10, 2000 reaffirming the accreditation of the University. WASC highlighted four issues in its action letter: 1. articulation of a shared academic vision; 2. evaluating educational effectiveness; 3. sustaining capacity/faculty workload; 4. diversity. The WASC Commission also asked the Site Visit Team during its visit to evaluate the effectiveness and progress of the joint Doctorate in Educational Leadership (EdD) Program implemented by CSU San Marcos and two other institutions following WASC Commission approval in 2005.

Articulation of a Shared Academic Vision

The WASC Commission in 2000 expressed concern that the articulation of an academic vision and of structures for the development of new programs is essential for coherent decision-making and program development at CSU San Marcos responsive to the emerging needs of the University's county, state, and students. CSU San Marcos in its Capacity & Preparatory Review Report addresses this concern in its discussion of Standard 1 and Standard 4 and Appendix C summarizing the University's progress in addressing the four WASC issues. CSU San Marcos has made substantial progress in responding to WASC's concern regarding the need for articulation of a shared academic vision. The University's mission statement was last revised and streamlined in 2000 and continues today to guide the institution. The vision statement was

adopted in 2000. Both documents are visible and well known by campus constituents. The University has made substantial progress in developing strategic and academic planning processes reflective of the University's mission, vision, and five strategic priorities. Please see the discussion of educational mission, vision, and planning in Standards 1 and 4 of this Report.

Evaluating Educational Effectiveness

The WASC Commission in 2000 observed that the assessment and evaluation of student learning and campus programs was a work in progress at CSU San Marcos and urged the University to move aggressively forward with assessment efforts and the development of an information infrastructure that would provide data necessary for assessment and planning initiatives. CSU San Marcos in its Capacity & Preparatory Review Report addresses this concern in its discussion of Standard 2 and Standard 4, the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators in Appendix A and Appendix I addressing the program assessment process, and Appendix C summarizing the University's progress in addressing the four WASC issues. The University has significantly increased its capacity to support assessment from the department to the institutional levels. New Offices of Strategic Planning and Assessment and Institutional Planning and Analysis were established in 2006 to centralize campus planning assessment efforts and to provide more systematic and useful data. An organized program review process is in place with established guidelines and timelines. Learning assessment is defined as a faculty responsibility and is a planned component of all program reviews. All academic departments have been asked to provide information on their student learning outcomes, assessment activities, and the results of these activities on an annual basis, though the initial 2005-06 cycle of annual reports was disappointing. The University has made good progress with developing institutional

consciousness and commitment to academic program review and learning assessments. The faculty have recognized the need to go beyond planning learning assessments to address the challenges associated with conducting these assessments and using evidence of learning. While there is a commitment to assessment of learning and much discussion about assessment methods, significant progress needs to be made with respect to the completion of learning assessments across programs so that evidence-based improvements can be implemented and evaluated in a timely cycle. Please see the discussion of assessment and institutional research in Standards 2 and 4 of this Report.

Sustaining Capacity/Faculty Workload

The WASC Commission in 2000 observed that CSU San Marcos had experienced difficulty in moving to a regular funding model in its transition from being a new campus and urged the University to address the workload implications of regular funding and to move ahead with a supportable model. CSU San Marcos in its Capacity & Preparatory Review Report addresses this concern in its discussion of Standard 3 and Standard 4, Appendix E addressing the University's budgetary process and Appendix F addressing faculty workload issues, and Appendix C summarizing the University's progress in addressing the four WASC issues. Since 2000 the University has experienced significant financial challenges as a result of the economic downturn of the economy and cuts in student enrollment and budget. After significant funding reductions, the University is now going through a period where those funds are being restored. The University has proceeded with the development of a budgetary structure that is based upon a "shared vision" and shared priorities, enabling the University to come together in the allocation of funds with a "University First Philosophy." The University has also developed a master plan

to accommodate the projected growth of the campus as defined by the California State University system. In the faculty arena, although there is a support model based on 20-to-1 faculty to student ratio, this is more a funding model rather than based on actual faculty in the classroom. The University will have to refine its process to determine the correct number of faculty in the classroom and what will be an acceptable percentage of courses taught by adjunct faculty. The University is currently in the process of analyzing and comparing workloads to those of other campuses of the California State University. Faculty and staff workload continues to be an issue of concern for the campus. The University has acknowledged the need for the compilation of data to assist in its resource allocation process. The University will need to use these data to ensure that the change in funding from a start-up University to a fully functional California State University will not adversely affect its service goals and objectives. Please see the discussion of sustaining institutional capacity and faculty workload in Standard 3 of this Report.

Diversity

The WASC Commission in 2000 noted the importance of diversity to the University's mission and urged CSU San Marcos to continue to attend to campus climate and to develop additional strategies to move the campus toward becoming the multicultural community envisioned in its mission statement. CSU San Marcos in its Capacity & Preparatory Review Report addresses this concern in its discussion of Standard 1 and Appendix C summarizing the University's progress in addressing the four WASC issues. The University has taken significant steps to address diversity and inclusiveness and to respond to and model the diversity of its region. Campus diversity has continued to expand, reflecting the demographics of the region. In Fall 2006,

37.9% of undergraduates were minority students. Educational equity, along with promoting “a climate of camaraderie, mutual respect and trust for all members of the community through support, effective communication, and sustained professional development,” has been identified as one of the priorities of the strategic plan. The President has created a structure in support of these strategic priorities by appointing an Educational Equity Task Force that, together with the Native Advisory Council, African American Advisory Council and Hispanic Advisory Council, serves as advocate for educational equity of underrepresented groups. To coordinate all these efforts, a new Interim Diversity and Equity Coordinator was recently appointed. The University is seeking to become a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and a task force has been charged with gathering information and making presentations to the campus community regarding what it means to be an HSI. Please see the discussion of educational equity and diversity in Standard 1 of this Report.

Joint Doctorate in Educational Leadership (EdD) Program

Representatives of the WASC Site Visit Team met during the site visit with a group of faculty members, administrators, and students from CSU San Marcos and the University of California, San Diego involved in the joint Doctorate in Educational Leadership (EdD) Program implemented in 2005. The Team reviewed ample evidence of effectiveness and continuing progress of the EdD Program in the following areas: 1. budget distribution and management; 2. program governance and administration; 3. distribution of faculty workload; 4. student learning outcomes assessment and program review. The EdD Program does not have a budget deficit and there are sufficient funds to operate the program with a steady state of 45 students. Faculty members who teach in the program are qualified to guide student research and receive

appropriate training and faculty development support. Program administration is effectively handled through a Joint Executive Committee (JEC), and the University of California, San Diego serves as a capable and willing administrative partner. The JEC has developed and used a number of helpful formative assessments/processes to measure student learning, including qualifying paper guidelines and a scoring guide and dissertation proposal guidelines. The EdD Program continues to make progress and expand the size of its modestly scaled target student population, despite the recent decision of one of the original partners, San Diego State, to drop out of the joint program and open its own EdD program. The Team members were impressed by the commitment, vitality, and enthusiasm of faculty and administrators in the EdD Program and by the evident enthusiasm and testimony of educationally enriching experiences offered by students from three different cohorts in the new program, most of whom are administrators in local K-12 schools who are applying the lessons of the program to real-world situations and issues in their school districts and schools. Like all graduate programs at CSU San Marcos, the joint Doctorate in Educational Leadership Program needs to more fully articulate formal student learning outcomes as the basis for its educational efforts and ongoing assessment of educational effectiveness.

SECTION II – EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY UNDER THE STANDARDS

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

In addressing the first standard, CSU San Marcos described the evolution of its mission and vision statements. The mission was last revised and streamlined in 2000 and continues today to guide the institution. The vision statement was adopted in 2000. Both documents are visible and well known by campus constituents (CFR 1.1). Campus engagement in these revisions and discussions, for example in the meaning of being “distinctive,” represents an example of transparency and good practice. Community Partnerships continues to be one of the overarching themes of the strategic priorities. During the visit President Haynes discussed the importance of being responsive to the community by expanding community partnerships.

The University is guided by clear educational goals and objectives. These appear in the Catalog, Schedule of Courses, and Student Handbook. Although the University has developed indicators and evidence of levels of achievement, the campus recognizes the need to further enhance “a shared vocabulary, understanding and commitment to a demonstration of educational effectiveness beyond individual courses.” Nevertheless, the University has now accumulated data to follow trends and provide benchmarks for different indicators. This information is available to the entire academic community through the University’s web page. The Capacity & Preparatory Review Report is a good example of how the data and evidence are organized to support each of the Standards (CFR 1.2). During the visit, the Team heard different examples of how data is used in decision-making processes. Several case studies were presented as such examples.

Cal State San Marcos has faced major leadership turnover since the last WASC visit, including a new president and an interim. The campus has learned from these transitions, as demonstrated in the Case Study on Presidential Transition (CFR 1.3). This Case Study addresses how the campus used the change in leadership for improvement, including the reorganization of certain areas and making other administrative changes. For example, the Office of Analytic Studies was restructured to become the Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis and Academic and Student Affairs were separated. After her appointment, President Haynes established a transition team that identified a number of key areas that needed improvement, among them, educational equity. This process convinced the President of the need to begin a new and more effective strategic planning process.

Integrity is one of the key values of Cal State San Marcos. As part of the CSU System, the university has common policies with the other institutions and procedures to ensure integrity, such as academic freedom and grievance policies that can be accessed online (CFR 1.4).

There is a strong link between student achievement and academic goals, although an area for improvement is graduation rates. The graduation rate of transfer students is higher than the rate for regularly admitted first-time freshmen students, which is lower than many CSU campuses (CFR 1.7). NSSE data indicates a series of factors to which the university needs to pay attention. These factors and corresponding actions are analyzed elsewhere in the Report.

The campus diversity has continued to expand, reflecting the demographics of the region. In Fall 2006, 37.9% of undergraduates were minority students. Educational Equity, along with

promoting “a climate of camaraderie, mutual respect and trust for all members of the community through support, effective communication, and sustained professional development,” has been identified as one of the priorities of the strategic plan. The President has created a structure in support of these strategic priorities by appointing an Educational Equity Task Force that, together with the Native Advisory Council, African American Advisory Council and Hispanic Advisory Council, serves as advocate for educational equity of underrepresented groups. To coordinate all these efforts, a new Interim Diversity and Equity Coordinator was recently appointed. This position reports directly to the University President (CFR 1.5). Members from these councils expressed to the team that campus climate has improved significantly.

The University is seeking to become a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and a task force has been charged with gathering information and making presentations to the campus community regarding what it means to be an HSI. The University has been listed in the “Top 100” universities to confer bachelor’s degrees to Hispanics. The campus has been less successful in attracting and retaining African-American students.

The Team recommends that the University should continue to attend to Educational Equity by hiring a permanent coordinator, and incorporating hiring practices that promote equity and diversity. The University should also continue to define diversity within the context of excellence.

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions

CSU San Marcos has clear admission and program policies in place that conform to CSU system, professional, and disciplinary standards (CFR 2.1, 2.2). Academic programs on the

undergraduate and graduate levels have clear graduation policies and requirements. The policies and committee structure established by the University and Faculty Senate ensure that the faculty of CSU San Marcos assume responsibility for the development of new programs and ongoing review and revision of existing programs. Since the last WASC visit in 2000, the University has created an Office of Graduate Studies and Research to support and coordinate all graduate programs and research activities.

Several academic programs at the University have received or are applying for professional accreditation, providing an additional external means for ensuring that programs meet accepted university and disciplinary norms and standards. The University's Chemistry and Teacher Credentialing Programs are professionally accredited and the new Nursing Program is in the initial accreditation process. The University's General Education Program is well established and ensures that students have GE experiences based on CSU guidelines and standards. The Team was impressed by the ongoing review and revision of the General Education Program and courses demonstrated during the site visit. Of particular note in the GE curriculum is the Library's Information Literacy Program which is programmatically integrated in the University curriculum and has served as a model for other information literacy programs in the CSU system.

In recent years the University has significantly increased its capacity to support assessment from the department to the institutional levels (CFR 2.3-2.6, 2.10). A new Office of Strategic Planning and Assessment was established in Academic Affairs in 2006 to centralize campus planning assessment efforts and organize new initiatives. A new Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis was also established to provide the University and academic programs more systematic and useful data. Indicators for student learning outcomes will be used to track student

progress in programs (CFR 4.5). An organized program review process (PEP) is in place with established guidelines and timelines. Learning assessment is defined as a faculty responsibility and is a planned component of all program reviews. The Senate Program Assessment Committee has revised program review guidelines to address the need for learning assessment while including review of dimensions of capacity such as resources, structures, and processes. A helpful Appendix on the University's Program Assessment Process in the CSU San Marcos Capacity & Preparatory Review Report outlines how program review evolved and traces the University's progress with developing learning outcomes and assessments.

The University's Capacity & Preparatory Review Report notes that while the University has learning outcomes in place, the "next step will be to improve the quality of these outcomes." All academic departments have been asked to provide information on their student learning outcomes, assessment activities, and the results of these activities on an annual basis. The initial 2005-06 cycle of annual reports was disappointing, with only 9 of the 28 departments submitting their annual assessment information. In particular, a review of the University's Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators reveals that few graduate programs have yet to develop formal learning outcomes. In response to these problems, college deans are now required, as part of their annual goals and performance review, to ensure that departments routinely conduct and submit reports on outcomes assessment. The University has also established a pool of funding to provide support for departments and programs conducting program reviews and learning outcomes assessment. The Team encourages the University to maintain and expand fiscal and faculty development support for program review and assessment efforts.

The University has made good progress with developing institutional consciousness and commitment to academic program review and learning assessments. Beyond commitment, there is an organizational structure in place with guidelines created by faculty to establish consistent practices across the University. The faculty have recognized the need to go beyond planning learning assessments to address the challenges associated with conducting these assessments and using evidence of learning. While there is a commitment to assessment of learning and much discussion about assessment methods, significant progress needs to be made with respect to the completion of learning assessments across programs so that evidence-based improvements can be implemented and evaluated in a timely cycle. For example, there are plans to develop electronic portfolios and utilize other assessment methods for this important goal. The Team views these plans as important first steps needing the important follow-through of review and interpretation of data about student learning, implementation of recommendation, and follow-up evaluation.

Given that program reviews have been completed in cycles, the Team urges that formal engagement with learning assessments commence in a more broad-based manner. For example, there is high institutional investment in plans to develop electronic portfolios, which will likely require the accumulation of student work over multiple semesters. However, more immediate learning assessments could be planned and conducted using rubrics and other methods that would be applicable to the portfolios when these have matured. Many schools are also finding success with development of assessment plans that map out the various assessments needed to look at the multiple learning objectives defined for a specific degree. These enable faculty to pace the overall work while beginning review of student work immediately. The Team urges

CSU San Marcos to move quickly in this area to enable the faculty to document improvements that are based on analysis of student learning and to give preliminary consideration of the effectiveness of such improvements. The Team urges the University to continue to make significant progress with learning assessment relating to degree objectives and with evaluating the effectiveness of improvements based on learning evidence.

The mission of the University emphasizes faculty and student contact and collaboration and faculty commitment to teaching, research, and community partnership which enhances student learning. In support of this commitment the University provides a variety of faculty development programs and activities (CFR 2.8, 2.9, 3.4). Of particular note is the TULIP (Technology Utilization in Learning and Information Platforms) that has provided intensive hands-on training in the uses of educational technologies to faculty members at the University since 1994. The primary campus resource for faculty development is an active Faculty Center strategically located in the new Library Building. This Faculty Center provides a multi-day New Faculty Institute for new tenure-track faculty, and a Faculty Fellows Program in the areas of e-learning, mentoring, and peer coaching. The Faculty Center organizes a Faculty Research Colloquium each semester and holds regular workshops and brown-bag lunches on topics of faculty and educational need and interest.

The University has increased the number the number of faculty awards over the last several years for excellence in teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, and service. The University also provides modest internal grants and funding opportunities. The Team encourages the University to continue its current investigation of how to combine various grant opportunities and provide additional funds in order to establish a more cohesive grant funding

process with more substantial funding in support of faculty development and institutional priorities.

The University is to be commended for its support of faculty development. Faculty articulated that they are well supported and that their advancement and ability to participate is determined by how much work and involvement they desire. The University's Capacity and Preparatory Review Report acknowledges that faculty development efforts have been "hindered by years of insufficient resources." The Team urges the University to continue to expand its support for faculty development despite a challenging budgetary climate.

CSU San Marcos is keenly aware of the characteristics of its students (CFR 2.10), having a highly defined regional-geographic service area and transfer agreements with community colleges within their region. The University assesses student satisfaction and student demographics with a number of surveys including the NSSE. The University has stated in its strategic plan that it is committed to respecting and modeling the diversity of its region within a context of social justice. An example of the University fulfilling its Educational Equity and Diversity goal is that it is in the process of acquiring status as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), as its student enrollment of Latino/a students reaches the 25% minimal threshold to be considered HSI.

CSU San Marcos is in the process of development of its co-curricular programs (CFR 2.11), growing them along with their enrollment. The University has developed an active student government and was in process of student elections while the Team was visiting. To further enhance student-life and encourage the growth of student organizations, the University indicated

that it plans for the construction of a Student Union in the future. Since the WASC 2000 visit, the University has added residence halls. The addition of residence halls has added a new student dimension and increased student involvement in campus life. The residence facilities house the University's *living/learning* program, a cohort-based program aimed at increasing student retention. The University plans for 10-15% of its student body to be residential by 2025, which is an ambitious building and enrollment plan. The Team was struck by the detail of the future building and enrollment plan. The University has been creative in utilizing its Foundation to fund the residence halls and outside grant-funding to construct a new child-care center (CFR 2.11, 2.13, 2.14)

The University has redesigned its student academic advising to include an Advising Center (CFR 2.12). The redesign seems to serve both freshmen and transfer students (CFR 2.14), offering various levels and specificity in its advising. The University also co-located the Advising Center and Career Services so that students can be broadly served for inter-related academic and career planning advising. The Team was impressed with the one-stop-shopping arenas that the University has developed for advising and for financial aid and fiscal services. The student governance leaders raised an advising issue of consistency and access to timely advising, and it is a Team recommendation that the University continue to monitor and assess its student advising for effectiveness and student satisfaction.

The University has a number of freshmen requirements, student support services, and course offerings that further its mission of student academic success (CFR 2.11 – 2.13). These include its Freshmen Year Experience course, second-language and writing requirements, student tutorial services for language and writing, *living/learning* residential program, community service, and

support for an ethnically diverse student population. The University is developing a student *e-portfolio* program; the program creates an electronic file for every student to submit samples of their writing for faculty critique. The *e-portfolio* has potential to further the University's writing requirement and improve students' ability and academic success. It is a Team recommendation that the *e-portfolio* program be reviewed at the next WASC visit. The University is purposeful in its use of technology and the facilities are rich in computer hardware; all the facilities, including the Library, are "smart classrooms," and the computer "help-desk" is conveniently set in a large student lab on the second floor of the Library (CFR 2.13).

The Student Affairs Division is initiating an assessment project for each of its departments (CFR 2.10 – 2.14). Each department will attempt to assess its effectiveness in relation to student personal goal development, including academic goals and career choices. The next WASC visit should review the progress that the Student Affairs Division is making in assessing and supporting student goal development and learning.

The challenge for CSU San Marcos will be maintenance of its educational objectives: "an emphasis on liberal learning, including critical thinking, intensive writing, and lifelong learning skills..."; developing a sense of community; maintaining small class size and low faculty-to-student ratios; and, involving students in co-curricular programs, while the University expands and grows rapidly. The Team recommends that the next WASC visit examine the University's progress towards developing its student co-curricular and academic educational objectives in relation to its enrollment management and strategic plan.

Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Sustainability

As part of the California State University system (CFR 3.9, 3.10), the University has been provided structure in its hiring process for its faculty and staff that helps to ensure the hiring of qualified faculty and staff members (CFR 3.1, 3.2).

The University experienced funding reductions in 2004 related to the economy of the State of California and is now going through a period where those funds are being restored as a result of its growth. The University has developed and is now implementing a strategic budgeting process that attempts to allocate new funds to the greatest area of need rather than simply instituting an across-the-board restoration of the funding cuts. As the University moved through the development of this process, it also recognized that its model for budgeting focused upon new programs and services and did not fully account for the need to maintain service levels as the campus grows.

The University is to be commended on the development of a budgetary structure that is based upon a “shared vision” and shared priorities (CFR 3.5). This has reduced the lobbying by individual departments for funding of their own projects and has allowed the University to come together in the allocation of funds with a “University First Philosophy.” The University process is built around agreed-upon funding of priority items and funding for external mandates, and the remaining “strategic funds” are allocated upon funding requests. The University Budget Committee is responsible for the process of accepting, analyzing, and approving budgetary requests of the campus (CFR 3.5). The University took all initiatives and strategic themes and

built a process to tie the budgetary process to themes. If a department can demonstrate that it ties to the themes, then it is likely that its proposal will be considered for funding. Final acceptance of the budgetary requests is made by the Executive Council of the University.

In the faculty arena, although there is a support model based on 20-to-1 faculty to student ratio, this is more a funding model rather than based on actual faculty in the classroom. The University will have to refine its process to determine the correct number of faculty in the classroom and what will be an acceptable percentage of courses taught by adjunct faculty.

The University is currently in the process of analyzing and comparing workloads to those of other campuses of the California State University. The University is committed to use data in the determination of workloads for administrators and staff. The University is currently revising the job descriptions of the management personnel of the institution to better align job responsibilities with the institutional priorities of the University. This will better align manager performance appraisal criteria to the goals and objectives of the University.

The University has acknowledged the need for the compilation of data to assist in its resource allocation process. It is important that the University focus on the development of metrics and the process of analyzing those metrics to assist in its budgetary process. The University will need to use these data to ensure that the change in funding from a start-up University to a fully functional California State University will not adversely affect its service goals and objectives.

The University has developed a master plan to accommodate the projected growth of the campus as defined by the California State University system. It is staged to accommodate growth in two phases and the physical master plan is built around the need to accommodate teaching 25,000 students by 2025.

Funding for the expansion of facilities according to the University's facilities master plan has been provided by the California State University system. The University has established a University Space Planning Committee charged with coordinating the process for assessing the needs of the campus and making recommendations to the Executive Council relating to the facilities. The University Space Planning Committee includes representatives from all campus divisions and has been successful in ensuring that the final configuration of buildings is aligned with the needs of the campus.

Using technology to improve administrative processes and to enhance learning has been a distinctive element of California State University San Marcos since its inception. The University has ensured that technology infrastructure has been fully integrated into its buildings and has ensured that technology is a high priority in its budgetary process. The Team's tour of campus buildings and discussions with faculty and staff demonstrate that the University is rightly proud of its commitment to technology and the quality of its technology support staff (CFR 3.6, 3.7).

The University has developed an inclusive, transparent budgetary process tied to the strategic goals of the University. The University should continue to make progress toward the maturity of

its budgetary process. In the time before the University's Educational Effectiveness Review, the University's process will need to mature to include the following:

- Funding not only faculty positions based on student numbers, but also funding other positions to maintain operational service levels (e.g., levels of police, numbers of maintenance support, etc.) based upon those student numbers.
- Providing better guidance on determining the actual budgetary effects of “mandates.”
- Gathering data to measure the effectiveness of the allocations made during the budgetary process. This involves both academic assessment and assessment of allocations made to facilities and business infrastructure.
- Gathering data to use as a “compass point” in understanding whether budget allocations are “in the ballpark.” The Team recommends using comparative data from similar or peer institutions.

Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement

Standard 4 provides the frame of reference for demonstrating effectiveness with strategic thinking and planning and with learning and improvement. CSU San Marcos has developed a solid foundation for effective strategic planning as is referenced in CFR 4.1-4.3. There is evidence of a workable structure that is founded on previous planning structures and commitments and organized to use planning at multiple levels in the organization.

The University's progress has been achieved within a larger context of organizational change characterized by growth in enrollments and programs and transitions through three presidents in recent years. The “path to planning” since the last WASC is well described as a progression from

an academic planning process (the Academic Blueprint), through intermediate participatory steps, to the current strategic planning processes that enable the alignment of resources with strategic priorities and objectives.

The University is demonstrating the use of planning to implement its commitment to five strategic priorities: academic excellence, student life, campus climate, community partnerships, and educational equity. Specific objectives under each priority create the basis for specific commitments and initiatives that are actualizing the mission and vision.

The current organizational model involves a combination of the Council for University Strategic Planning (CUSP) and the University Budget Committee, working in collaboration with the President's Cabinet and an Executive Council to align strategic priorities and related objectives with resources. Two leadership positions created in 2006 provide significant support for the effectiveness of this planning model: the Associate Vice President for Strategic Planning and Assessment and the Director of Institutional Planning and Analysis. A person or group leads the work and momentum associated with each strategic priority.

There are many strengths in evidence that are associated with this model. It is fully transparent with posting of information on the University website. In addition, this planning model is creating significant opportunities to engage in the use of institutional data for decision-making across the campus. Another strength cited by participants in the Team's meeting with strategic planning participants is the differentiation of decisions about the budget relative to priorities from specific programmatic decisions. The result, as described by one staff member, is that

“planning now drives the budget” instead of the reverse. Faculty are engaged in this process but this is more evident at the college level of planning activity.

Master planning for academics further demonstrates the use of planning as a process for using evidence and addressing the needs and opportunities of the institution. An advisory group reviews academic plans (also referenced as the Academic Blueprint) annually with consideration given to a range of factors that may affect decisions, including information from the Career Center. This process provides for systematic development of appropriate academic programs that connect the mission, resources, and state and local needs, and that strengthen community connections. The academic plans show projections of anticipated programs. The UAMP (master plan) lists academic programs the institution is committed to developing. These processes work in conjunction with the Academic Senate’s University Curriculum Committee (UCC), which assures that there is review of proposed programs for intellectual and academic integrity before they go to the Provost.

Overall, the Team’s several discussions with faculty on academic planning confirm what is reported with regard to the use of performance indicators (such as enrollment and retention) and quality assurance processes. This includes new programs, ongoing review, and appropriate data collection (CFR 4.4, 4.5). A strength is the focus created by posting data relating to key performance indicators on a single website maintained by the Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis. The campus can track performance relative to goals and utilize comparative data from peer institutions. There is a clear commitment to using evidence-based reviews and analysis at multiple levels and across multiple arenas and to link analyses with improvements as

is possible. Good examples are provided in the University's Capacity & Preparatory Review Report that are supported by Team meetings on site and materials in the team room.

A number of initiatives aim to provide other information about student progress and success in meeting academic goals. For example, a freshman survey (from the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute) and the NSSE are used to collect data from freshman students. These results are disseminated and made public and wide usage is said to take place (CFR 4.6, 4.8). Other surveys to provide the campus with institutional data are cited: The University of Delaware Study of Costs and Productivity, a University alumni survey, and the CSU Balanced Scorecard and system-wide surveys. Student Affairs also uses the CAS (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education) and other surveys. A strength is the commitment to data on KPIs and diversity and trend data to examine evidence over time. The next step for CSU San Marcos is to move ahead with more use of the information.

The University is described as committed to measuring the perceptions of CSU San Marcos's effectiveness in the community and across the region. A recent proposal to the Carnegie Foundation identified systems in place for such assessment. There are various University Councils and a "Chamber/University partnership project" is referenced.

Finally, the Team notes as a strength the University's transition to a common set of administrative applications--implementation of an Oracle enterprise reporting system (ERP), both the Finance and Human Resource systems, and the Student Administration implementation in 2008. Also, the Campus Solutions portion of Peoplesoft has been implemented. This

undertaking and the CSU Data Warehouse Project assure that the University can continue to make progress in engaging with the large amount of data collected and use this to support change and progress of CSU San Marcos (CFR 4.5).

SECTION III – MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The WASC Site Visit Team was treated with collegiality, generosity, and hospitality during its well-organized three-day site visit to Cal State San Marcos. The Team found campus members on every level to be pleasant, collegial, professional, and committed to advancing the educational mission of CSU San Marcos. The Team was impressed by many aspects of the University, including its beautiful and welcoming campus, and by many examples of good practices across the University.

During its visit, the Team heard from many groups their vision for the future of the University. These visions include the following: Five years from now the campus must think of itself as a “University first” rather than in silos; there should be a rigorous and relevant curriculum; processes should be systemic; the community should see the University as a beacon capable of attracting a diverse student population, faculty, and staff; the University will continue to value being a place where students are welcomed and not abandoned; the University must show agility to respond to diverse and growing needs; the campus is living the strategic plan.

The picture of the University is not yet clearly or fully defined but there is general excitement about the future. In order to create that future, the University needs to clearly define the picture of what it wants to be so that it is understood and shared by all members of the University

community. The enrollment mix, and numbers of freshmen and transfer students, should be determined, as well as the size of the faculty and relevant curricular and extra-curricular offerings. The University has created the structures and processes to move forward and now must sustain them so they mature. Constant evaluation of these structures and processes must continue as part of the habits of the institution.

In moving forward, the University needs to consider the things that are highly valued by the University community. These include students having access to faculty, a place that attracts people who want to be part of building something, a high level of participation in different processes, and a collegial approach to community building and program development. The Team is confident that the campus understands the challenges of moving forward while at the same time maintaining the values of its past.

The Team offers the following concluding findings and recommendations, drawn from the previous sections of the Report, in order to assist and support Cal State San Marcos in moving forward to realize its mission, vision, and strategic plan:

1. The University has taken significant steps to address diversity and inclusiveness and to respond to and model the diversity of its region. Educational equity, along with promoting “a climate of camaraderie, mutual respect and trust for all members of the community through support, effective communication, and sustained professional development,” has been identified as one of the priorities of the strategic plan. The University should continue to attend to Educational Equity by hiring a permanent coordinator, and incorporating hiring practices that

promote equity and diversity. The University should also continue to define diversity within the context of excellence.

2. The University has significantly increased its capacity to support assessment from the department to the institutional levels. It has made good progress with developing institutional consciousness and commitment to academic program review and learning assessments. Beyond commitment, there is an organizational structure in place with guidelines created by faculty to establish consistent practices across the University. The faculty have recognized the need to go beyond planning learning assessments so as to address the challenges associated with conducting these assessments and using evidence of learning. All academic departments are asked to provide information on their student learning outcomes, assessment activities, and the results of these activities on an annual basis.

While the University has learning outcomes in place, the next step will be to improve the quality of these outcomes. The University needs to make significant progress with learning assessment relating to degree objectives and with evaluating the effectiveness of improvements based on learning evidence. The Team urges CSU San Marcos to move quickly to enable the faculty to document improvements that are based on analysis of student learning and to give preliminary consideration of the effectiveness of such improvements. The Team also encourages the University to maintain and expand fiscal and faculty development support for program review and assessment efforts.

3. The University provides a variety of faculty development programs and activities in support of its mission and strategic priorities and initiatives. The University is to be commended for its

support of faculty development even though faculty development efforts have been hindered by insufficient resources. The University should continue to expand its support for faculty development. The Team encourages the University to continue its current investigation of how to combine various grant opportunities and provide additional funds in order to establish a more cohesive grant funding process with more substantial funding in support of faculty development and institutional priorities.

4. CSU San Marcos is keenly aware of the characteristics of its students, having a highly defined regional-geographic service area and transfer-agreements with community colleges within their region. The University is in the process of development of its co-curricular, academic advising, and student support programs, growing them along with their enrollment. The Student Affairs Division is initiating an assessment project for each of its departments of their effectiveness in relation to student personal goal development, including academic goals and career choices. The challenge for CSU San Marcos will be maintenance of its educational objectives: “an emphasis on liberal learning, including critical thinking, intensive writing, and lifelong learning skills...”; developing a sense of community; maintaining small class size and low faculty-to-student ratios; and, involving students in co-curricular programs, while the University expands and grows rapidly. The Team encourages the University to continue to make progress in developing its student co-curricular and academic educational objectives in relation to its enrollment management and strategic plan by the time of the next site visit.

5. The University has developed an inclusive, transparent budgetary process tied to the strategic goals of the University. The University should continue to make progress toward the maturity of

its budgetary process. In the time before the University's Educational Effectiveness Review, the University's process will need to mature to include the following:

- Funding not only faculty positions based on student numbers, but also funding other positions to maintain operational service levels (e.g., levels of police, numbers of maintenance support, etc.) based upon those student numbers.
- Providing better guidance on determining the actual budgetary effects of “mandates.”
- Gathering data to measure the effectiveness of the allocations made during the budgetary process. This involves both academic assessment and assessment of allocations made to facilities and business infrastructure.
- Gathering data to use as a “compass point” in understanding whether budget allocations are “in the ballpark.” The Team recommends using comparative data from similar or peer institutions.

6. The University has made good progress with the development and refinement of components of a planning model that now offers structures that support effective decision-making with respect to alignment of resources with strategic priorities and academic program planning. The challenge ahead is to refine and adjust the model as needed to remain responsive to the challenges of planned growth in enrollment. The University should continue working with the current planning model and demonstrate continuing progress over time.

SECTION IV – PREPARATIONS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REPORT AND REVIEW

Cal State San Marcos in its Capacity & Preparatory Review provides substantial evidence of institutional capacity and of the development of structures and processes in support of educational effectiveness. The University's intention, expressed by members of the WASC Steering Committee, is to institutionalize both capacity and educational effectiveness commitments through the development and integration of institutional planning and assessment systems and processes. The University is currently engaged in implementing the design for the upcoming Educational Effectiveness Review as described in the institutional Self-Study Proposal. The Team encourages the University to take special care and timely action to ensure a seamless transition from the work of the existing WASC Steering Committee, which organized the Capacity & Preparatory Review, to the work of the continuing WASC Self-Study Committees focused on the three themes of the University's Educational Effectiveness Review.

Like other universities, CSU San Marcos faces significant challenges in a short timeline in fully implementing the structures and processes it has in place for planning and assessment and in demonstrating the results and systematic uses of assessment in its Educational Effectiveness Review. As CSU San Marcos moves forward to the next phase of the accreditation process in the Educational Effectiveness Review, it must keep in mind that it needs to create a culture of evidence and demonstrate that it is using that evidence in a "feedback loop" for improvement of student learning as well as its for its processes. At present, that culture is uneven. What the University has learned at this point from incorporating data in decision-making processes could be a lesson that is emulated in the next phase of its accreditation and institutional assessment

process to strengthen institutional learning goals and objectives, the collection of results from the classroom as well as from extracurricular activities, and the demonstration of how the University is using this evidence to become a true learning organization. The WASC Site Visit Team looks forward to coming back in two years and learning how much Cal State San Marcos has accomplished.